

PRINCESSES LADIES AND
SALONNIÈRES
OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XV



Marie, Princesse de
Pologne, Reine de
France et de Navarre

MARIE, PRINCESS OF POLAND QUEEN OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE
From August 1725-June 1768 born 1703

Print by Chereau from the port oil by C. Dandré

PRINCESSES LADIES
& SALONNIÈRES
OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XV

BY

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IVY E. CLEGG

DEDICATION

I DEDICATE this book to that perfect friend, my husband, so prematurely snatched from my affections, and so sorely missed. But for him this work and its predecessor would never have existed

As in the past, I have sought, as he loved me to do, to re-endow my heroines with life, with their characteristic traits, their emotions and passions, and to re-create their environment

Almost all the essays in this volume were finished before he died, some of them had even been revised on his advice. Hence it is our joint work, and its publication affords me not only the consolation of keeping my promise to him, but also of bringing back to life something of his beautiful mind.

August 19th, 1927

Anniversary of my Husband's birthday

TH. L. LATOUR

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PREFACE

I would recommend all who are oppressed by their own cares, disquieted by the outlook of to-day and saddened by life's disappointments, to read Princesses, Ladies and Salonnieres of the Reign of Louis XV

I do so with confidence, because, by the magic of this vividly imaginative work, the reader will be transported far from the exigencies of the present, to live again in a society throbbing with interest.

The simple sincerity of the style, and above all the emotional skill which makes the scenes and people of a vanished era live once more, will carry the reader with them until he shares that stirring life of the eighteenth century, so vibrant, so full of ideas, new thoughts, and follies. The chapters are strictly historical, but instead of being pedantic and formal they seem like stories written for the entertainment and day-dreaming of their readers

Who but a woman could evoke these notable feminine personalities, and what woman was better qualified to make a complete success of the task than Thérèse Latour? Profound knowledge and psychological insight were not enough. It needed vision, the gift of restoring the dead to life and clothing them anew in flesh and blood. It needed the power to reveal what these heroines of the past confessed to the world and what they hid in their hearts. It needed a woman, who, trembling, could put herself in their places, show their real faces and wear, too, their masks

PREFACE

These feminine personalities good and bad, with all their varied gifts, foreshadowed in the eighteenth century the coming of the modern woman. They foretold the age of equality and the evolution which manifests itself in every civilization in favour of a fairer distribution of the rights and duties of the sexes.

And I in drawing the attention of the public to the present work am proud to bow, in the spirit of comradeship before the equality of feminine talent.

LÉON FRAPIE

MARIE LECZINSKA QUEEN OF FRANCE

AT the beginning of the year 1719 Philippe d'Orléans, Regent of France, "seized with pity" for Stanislas Leczinska who, by the bold and brilliant audacity of the Swedish King, Charles XII, had been made for a short time King of Poland, allowed this dethroned and impoverished monarch to settle down with his family in the country-town of Wissembourg, situated on the Alsatian frontier. Such permission was not without danger to the person who granted it. The new King of Poland, Augustus, Elector of Saxony, who was both powerful and spiteful, visited the unfortunate Stanislas with his resentment. Thus, to succour "the poor hare cowering at the bottom of the furrow", as the newspapers of the time expressed it, was to run the risk of incurring Augustus II's anger. However, no harm befell the Regent for having shown compassion, while on their side, Stanislas and his family experienced once more the intense joy of having a home of their own.

But the family were in very straitened circumstances at Wissembourg. They lived in the smallest of houses and necessaries were often lacking in their humble abode. A few faithful followers, whom they could neither pay nor feed, served as an apology for a guard of honour. The jewels of the former Queen of Poland, Catherine Alapinska, were held as security by a moneylender,

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but even this last resource threatened rapidly to come to an end no matter how economical the dethroned Queen might be

Catherine did not bear this poverty without bitterness. She was by nature hard and violent and the contrast between the past and present made her unjust and cruel to her husband. The situation was still further aggravated by Stanislas Leczinska's old mother. Gloomy and morose she never ceased to deplore the departed glory of her son and joined with her daughter-in law in reproaching the dethroned king for the loss of his crown.

But this family soured by misfortune, counted among its members two who had preserved intact the amiable qualities with which the gods had endowed them. These were father and daughter.

Marie, the daughter scarcely sixteen when the Leczinskases settled in Wissembourg possessed the gift of suffering in silence and of never wearying others with her troubles. Misfortune developed in her a profound and intense piety and gave to her youthful mind the maturity of a woman who no longer demands happiness. The sole joys which she anticipated from life were to have long conversations with her father of whom she was passionately fond to linger in church and to look after the poor people in the village. Stanislas had educated his daughter himself. This enthusiastic and imaginative scholar essayed to make her his second self. But Marie had inherited nothing of her father's wild imagination. Rational both by nature and necessity she was profoundly grieved in spite of her intense filial admiration by the opposite extremes into which her father's temperament threw

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him. Lively and unstable as the majority of the Poles, Stanislas, ever ambitious and romantic, would pass from an attack of heartrending despair to hours of radiant happiness. He dreamed once more of the throne for himself and his family, and even reached the conviction that glory and happiness would revisit them through the marriage of his daughter, however timorous and silently resigned she might be.

But this belief, which seemed so like a fairy tale, was to be realized.

At the Court of France schemes were on foot to marry the young King. The project was not likely to present any difficulty, for Louis, the youth, was as attractive as his kingdom was delightful and powerful. As a baby he had been delicate, but his ardent pursuit of the chase had made him strong and muscular. He had an elegant figure; his handsome Bourbon face was softened by a beautiful pair of kind, grey eyes which gave it languour and poetry. His gentle, dreamy glance was warm with sympathy for all on whom he looked, a natural grace set off his person, and the fame of his faultless courtesy, especially to women, had already passed beyond the French frontiers. Nevertheless, to find him just exactly the right wife was no easy matter.

The difficulty arose out of the slavish love which the Duc de Bourbon, Chief Minister of that day, had vowed to his haughty mistress, Madame de Prie, and the boundless and cautious ambition of the energetic favourite. It was only in the hope of becoming and remaining all-powerful at the Court of France that Madame de Prie had accepted this one-eyed, ugly, narrow-minded lover. She intended that her pride and cupidity should regain all that she had sacrificed.

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in allowing the Duc de Bourbon to make love to her. But in order to attain her desire for supreme and lasting power it was essential that the King should be married to a queen who would not take umbrage at Madame de Prie. So it was indispensable that this future queen should be not only easy to manage but also without parents powerful enough to give her support without allies and without any other friends at the Court but the favourite and her lover. Such a queen would be quite ready to kiss the hand which had placed her on the throne of France and to efface herself before the exactions of her patroness.

It was however impossible to push Louis into a *mésalliance*. He could only marry a princess. But, where to find this princess without fortune without the support of any throne without relations at the Court of France who would be quite willing to be the favourite's grateful protégée and to take no other place beside her husband's throne excepting only what one chose to allow her?

To these difficulties was added another at least as important in the eyes of Madame de Prie. It was essential that the princess whose hand was to be asked in marriage should be of an age to give heirs to the crown very quickly. The mistress of a Bourbon would take good care that nothing was neglected to keep the d'Orléans at a distance from the throne. Her chief grievance against the little seven years-old Spanish Infanta affianced to Louis XV and being brought up at that very time at Versailles had been that for more than eight years the throne would be at the mercy of the King's health by reason of the extreme youth of his betrothed.

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In spite of so many obstacles to her project, Madame de Prie had no doubt of its ultimate success. She caused inquiries to be made throughout Europe by her agents so that she might be in possession of complete lists of all the marriageable princesses. More than one hundred names figured in these lists, and among them were Anne of England, Elizabeth of Russia, Mademoiselle de Vermandois, own sister of the Duc de Bourbon, and numerous young and attractive princesses. But none of these names satisfied Madame de Prie. So she continued her inquiries until, among her personal friends, she heard of a moneyless princess, the daughter of a deposed king, simply brought up, tractable, unpretentious, unambitious, completely ignorant of Court life and twenty-two years old.

This princess who answered so perfectly to Madame de Prie's wishes was no other than Marie Leczinska. The discovery advanced matters considerably. But there still remained the most difficult half of the obstacles to overcome. France had to be induced to accept Louis XV's marriage to Marie Leczinska. This marriage meant a breach with Spain, who would be humiliated by the return of her Infanta, a breach with Russia, whose Princess Elizabeth loved and wanted Louis, and the dissatisfaction of the country, which gained from this marriage neither glory nor honour, riches nor alliances. Madame de Prie saw all this, but was daring enough to face the situation in order to satisfy her own ambition. Her firm will and clear mind served her so well that the redoubtable Marquise knew no misgivings, no momentary fear or weakness before reaching her goal.

She hastened at the very outset to have as flattering

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a portrait as possible of Marie Leczinska executed by the fashionable painter Gobert. The artist had the excellent idea prompted perhaps by Madame de Prie of copying the pose and details of a portrait of the Duchesse de Bourgoyne of which among the various portraits of his mother Louis seemed particularly fond. Did this skill contribute to charm the young King when he was shown the portrait of his fiancée by Gobert? Perhaps. It is certain that he was very much pleased with the portrait and that when looking at it he uttered for the first time a phrase which he often repeated during the first three years of his marriage. She is the loveliest of all.

At the same time that Madame de Prie was endeavouring to excite Louis XV's affections for Marie Leczinska she persuaded the Duc de Bourbon to call a private council for the purpose of considering the subject of the King's marriage. The Chief Minister acting under Madame de Prie's instructions took care to summon to this council only his own friends with one single exception. This unavoidable exception was Cardinal de Fleury Archbishop of Fréjus former tutor to the King and all powerful in matters which concerned the young monarch's mind and conduct as well as at Court and in the Government. Fleury outwardly retiring discreet and humble with his soft, weak voice, his spare gestures his lengthy orisons his affectation of contempt for grandeur and glory was the real power at Court and intended to be so. Capable of making and unmaking ministries for a long time he refused to accept a title which might have frightened the timid Louis. But he never allowed his pupil to take any initiative. One of his chief preoccupations had been to reduce the Prince

with whose education he was entrusted, to a state of perpetual childhood, so that he might dominate him the better. It was for this reason that he had unobtrusively kept him out of public affairs and sought to substitute for mental activity the need for physical exercise which should serve as a cloak for Louis' indolence

How could such a man be left out, especially when the marriage of his pupil, the King, was in question? Fleury shared the general opinion at this private council. He declared that his solicitude for the welfare of the King's soul, as well as his very ardent desire to see without loss of time heirs to the throne, made him rejoice over the project of a marriage whereby the King would gain a real wife immediately and not merely a child.

So the Marquise saw success in sight. To render it more effectual she repaired on a secret mission to Marie Leczinska in order to use her wiles to stir up the Princess against Fleury. Madame de Prie sought by this manœuvre to weaken, to her own advantage in the future, the power of the tutor whose duplicity and ambition she divined. Marie, ignorant of Court intrigues, did not see through the favourite's machinations. She believed all the bad which Madame de Prie told her about the Cardinal, and felt very disinclined to like him. Thus, her sincerity and her innocence predisposed her to make an enemy at the Court of France of the person who, next to the King, would have the most influence on her happiness. And she had no friend to warn her of the danger of her mistake. At Versailles they were already laughing at her name which but yesterday was unknown. Voltaire produced some very witty and comic effects from the harsh syllables of this name without anyone thinking that it might cause

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pain to the girl who, with a heart full of gratitude was shortly to be made Queen of France. She was so pleased at having been chosen this bride of the morrow, that she no longer felt the pain which humiliations inflict. For she had been forced to confess to one of Louis XV's messengers sent to ask her for a pair of old slippers to serve as a pattern for those which the King wished to include in his wedding presents to her that she only possessed the shoes she was wearing! The messenger persisted and after a lengthy hunt through all her things they came across the only pair of ball slippers which Marie Leczinska had ever worn. It was these old ball slippers that the messenger took to the Parisian boot maker as a pattern!

Nevertheless Louis XV's courtiers and counsellors were anxious that the marriage should be celebrated with all pomp and circumstance while the dethroned king Stanislas radiantly happy, wished everything for the great day to be on a magnificent scale. By command of Louis XV the same marriage settlements were made in Marie Leczinska's case as had been promised in that of the Spanish Infanta. Thus she received fifty thousand crowns for rings and jewellery. Two hundred and fifty thousand *livres* on her union with the King and the further guarantee of an annual allowance of twenty thousand crowns should she be left a widow. All these provisions made the marriage by proxy was fixed for the 15th of August 1725. Marie had asked as a special favour that the solemn event which was to transform her life and make her a poor and obscure princess the wife of his most Christian and powerful Majesty Louis XV might be placed under the patronage of Our Lady whose Feast of the Assumption it was

It was for this reason that this romantic, and yet in many respects disquieting, marriage took place on the 15th of August, in Strasbourg Cathedral. The organ pealed forth strains of triumphant music. The ex-King Stanislas seemed to become once more the brilliant and youthful *seigneur* who had sat on the throne at Warsaw. The Polish guard of honour were attired in the richest uniforms whose new and brilliant ornaments glittered and shone in the sun; happiness, hope and confidence were reflected all around. The Princess alone collapsed on the Royal prie-dieu which had been placed for her in the centre of the cathedral, and leaning her head against the arm of her chair, wept long and audibly. Were they tears of joy that she shed? Or had, perhaps, this modest Polish princess a presentiment that it was much easier to reign at Wissembourg than at Versailles? Did she already feel that virtues and good intentions were not enough to keep Louis' affections for any length of time?

The ceremony at Strasbourg was to be ratified on the 5th of September in the chapel at the Castle of Fontainebleau. On that day Louis XV himself would offer his hand to his Queen, and was already awaiting the moment with impatience. He had despatched Mademoiselle de Clermont, the Chief Minister's sister, to meet and escort the Queen. Mademoiselle de Clermont departed on this important and pleasant mission in a sumptuous equipage. Twelve royal coaches, each one drawn by eight horses, led the procession; then followed twelve special coaches, behind these twenty-four magnificent carriages came fifty which were more ordinary. The suite which accompanied Mademoiselle de Clermont was worthy of the coaches.

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which escorted her. She had besides seven ladies in waiting two maids-of honour and numerous equerries and pages. And lastly, as a compliment to Marie Leczinska she had brought all the gold plate which Louis possessed.

But notwithstanding this display of luxury and these costly attentions, Marie Leczinska's arrival in France was very unlike that of the queens who had preceded her. There were no official demonstrations in her honour no diplomatic receptions not even a triumphal entry into the capital of her adoption. After all Marie Leczinska was only the poor protégée of a favourite a protégée whom the King certainly wanted to marry but not to associate with the glory of his throne. France regarded her as a probable cause of wars the nobility as an intruder the ministers as a complication in public affairs without advantages the Court had an idea that she would be awkward and shy. The King alone on seeing her repeated the remark which he had made when he first beheld her portrait *She is the loveliest of all!*

Was Marie Leczinska really lovely? And was her appearance going to help her to command respect at the French Court? In the beginning Louis certainly compared her with Blanche de Castille the beautiful queen whose praises were sung so gracefully by Thibault de Champagne but as a matter of fact Marie Leczinska resembled Blanche de Castille in nothing but her extreme piety. Devoid of any real attractions in spite of her height and beautiful figure there was nothing about her to arrest attention excepting what people are pleased to call *la beauté du diable*. It was to her brilliant complexion and the bloom of health on her cheeks that

she owed her beauty She was, moreover, too sincere and too pious to be a coquette, and would have strongly reprobated any attempt on her part to improve her appearance with the object of making herself more attractive She had no idea of the art of inspiring love and thought that the strongest feeling which she could have for her husband was that of gratitude. Chaste to the point of ascetism, she hid rather than revealed her shy charms to the passionate husband, who asked for nothing more than to be allowed to admire and love her. Indeed, Louis, who was flattered at having a wife of twenty-two when he himself was under sixteen, was at that restless age when a wife could have exerted a great influence over him. But Marie did not discern that the love which she had inspired in the King could only be transient ; that it was necessary to make a real conquest of her Royal lover She responded with a dutiful resignation to the King's passionate advances and was unable either to agitate, disturb, or satisfy the heart and mind of this growing youth, half-man, half-child, whose indolent and undecided character could at that time have been so easily moulded by the wife whom he was flattered to own Marie failed to perceive that here was a splendid and unique opportunity to become influential, to make up for her mediocre birth and position and to become a real Queen of France The love which she inspired in Louis failed to engender either confidence or fondness She continued to indulge in the grateful admiration which she had vowed to him and to stand in timid awe of the might of one who in her eyes appeared so great These sentiments dominated her to such a degree that when she was in the King's presence she

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which escorted her. She had besides seven ladies-waiting two maids-of honour and numerous equerries and pages. And lastly as a compliment to Marie Leczinska she had brought all the gold plate which Louis possessed.

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lost all initiative and the power to converse intelligently. The Marquise de la Ferté Imbault relates how one day during a visit that he paid her, Marie Leczinska could suggest no better amusement for the King than that of killing flies on the window panes. On another occasion when Louis, impatient to spend the night with his Queen, arrived about eleven o'clock in the evening, Marie inflicted fairy-tales on him for three-quarters of an hour. She loved to make her ladies read aloud these fantastic stories which banished the fears to which she was a prey.

The Queen's maladroit behaviour was not long in doing her harm. In spite of his love, Louis soon became provoked by the virtue of a companion who introduced more duty than pleasure into their life. He who in the beginning would not allow his Queen's beauty to be compared with that of any lady of the Court, what soever so much more wonderful did Marie appear in his eyes, was now ready to listen to Cardinal Fleury's biased remarks against her. The former tutor dreaded any other influence than his own over the King. He did not wish anyone, and least of all the Queen, to gain dominion over the mind of Louis XV. So when he saw how very much in love the young husband was, Fleury waited for a favourable opportunity to destroy the intimacy between husband and wife.

The fall of the Duc de Bourbon's ministry gave the Cardinal his opportunity.

Marie Leczinska did not forget for a single instant that she owed her elevation to the French throne to Madame de Prie and the Duc de Bourbon. And how ever harshly and even contemptuously the haughty Marquise may frequently have treated her and however

unjust at times may have been the Chief Minister, the young Queen never showed either of them anything but affectionate gratitude So the Duke and his mistress knew that in the daughter of Stanislas Leczinska they had a docile instrument who might become useful in a time of crisis This crisis, which neither of them had ever considered probable, occurred in June, 1726.

Fleury had only thrust the Duc de Bourbon into the office of Chief Minister because he knew that he was incompetent, and he himself counted on governing in the name of the Duke But the meek, crafty Cardinal very quickly perceived that the Marquise de Prie had a special policy of her own in all matters Her triumph regarding the King's marriage had made her more daring and grasping than ever So the Archbishop of Fréjus, instead of having to deal only with a submissive man such as the Duc de Bourbon, had to use his influence in 1725 and 1726 to combat the pretensions of the Marquise The mistress even carried off two or three political palms of victory over the head of the Cardinal That was going too far! Fleury decided on the fall of the Duc de Bourbon He had only to employ the all-powerful influence which he had over Louis to make him demand the Chief Minister's resignation Madame de Prie was indignant at the King's step and rushed to the Queen to insist that she should intercede in favour of the Duke Marie, who was always filled with an awed admiration for her husband, implored Madame de Prie not to drag her into this affair But the Marquise was inexorable So the Queen obeyed those whom she always looked upon as her only friends and interceded on their behalf with a persistent

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clumsiness which exasperated Louis At this period Louis XIV's successor held exactly the same views as his grandfather with regard to feminine influence on politics He would not allow that any woman possessed the skill to meddle in politics Fleury supported this point of view If ever Your Majesty exclaimed the Cardinal one day to the King should listen to women's advice in public matters Your Majesty and the State will be lost irretrievably On that very same day Louis XV surrounded by his intimate friends, repeated his former tutor's remarks adding I replied that if any woman dared to discuss public affairs with me I would at once have the door shut in her face

It was after this that Marie Leczinska so awkward in her efforts to influence her husband thinking that the grace of the crown bestowed on her by Louis conferred all other rights as well took the liberty of mediating in favour of the personages whom Fleury had rendered odious in the eyes of the King She pleaded their cause so warmly and so tragically that Louis at Fleury's instigation began to think that the Queen's cause was no longer his He regarded this intervention as monstrous and he never forgave the Queen but ever afterwards bore her a grudge At the same time Fleury who from the early days of the marriage had been annoyed at the Queen's unsympathetic attitude towards himself showed an overt antipathy to Marie Leczinska now that she had declared herself the friend of those whom he denounced as the King's enemies The same decree which imposed imprisonment on Madame de Prie tolled the knell of the Queen's happiness (June 1726)

Marie noticed at once that the King's feelings for her



CARDINAL DE FLEURY
1653-1743

1653-1743

² Direct after the portrait painted by Huacinte Rigaud chevalier de l'ordre de St Michel

had changed The day following the fall of the Duc de Bourbon's ministry, he signified to her, without adding the slightest word of affection, his formal wish that she should obey the new minister unreservedly. "I beg, Madame, and, if necessary, I order you to place credence in everything that the former Archbishop of Fréjus tells you on my behalf, as though he were I—LOUIS "

The master gave his orders, and took little account of the pain which he was inflicting on the Queen Marie wept openly over this letter before Villars, so tragic was the blow which the King had dealt her But she obeyed with all the sincerity of her nature, and made no complaint Neither did she complain a few days later when she was ill, and had to wait four days before the King went to see her Louis XV feared that the Queen might be suffering from small-pox, so the greater anxiety for his own health even kept him from wondering if his absence might not perchance hurt the Queen's feelings In the end, after the doctor had pronounced the illness to be nothing more serious than indigestion, the King went to see her, but his visits lasted only a few minutes During her convalescence Louis spent three-quarters of an hour every day with the Queen, but Fleury remained with him the whole time After a month's convalescence Marie received the longed-for permission to rejoin her husband at Versailles It was on the very day when she was expected that Louis elected to hunt the stag instead of going to meet his Queen Finally, when Marie presented her first children to the King, she trembled from fear of the King's displeasure when she learned that instead of the desired son she had nothing to offer him but twin daughters (the 14th of August, 1727) But the King was delighted with the Queen's

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generous gift so much so that in the pride of his young fatherhood he exclaimed 'Only think, d'Argenson declared that I could not have children! And see! Instead of one I have two

This birth of the twins however did not satisfy the needs of the Crown. An heir to the throne of France was essential. The whole nation looked for it and Fleury considered the Queen singularly maladroit in having failed to give one to the King. It was for this reason that he resolved to interfere with the object of promoting the desired event. First of all he pointed out to Louis XV that the constant changes of which he was so fond were not to be recommended for the Queen until she should have given a dauphin to France. Louis great traveller that he was immediately issued instructions that Marie was no longer to follow him from château to château. So Marie Leczinska passed the greater part of her time far from her husband. Her conversations in future with him whom she regarded as her earthly god were more often to be written than spoken. But she was not allowed to write to Louis direct. Her letters were forwarded through Fleury who replied for the King and often forgot intentionally to transmit the Queen's loving messages to her husband. These letters of Marie Leczinska to Fleury the aim and object of which was the King did harm by their submissiveness their abnegation and the sorrowful affection which they expressed for the distant husband.

I implore the King wrote the Queen "to cease writing to me if it is a bother provided that in these lost moments he thinks a little of a wife whose love for him is as passionate as it is tender. What resigned and Christian bitterness underlies

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the expressions. "if it is a bother" and "in these lost moments"!

It was these same tender and sorrowful sentiments which characterized the life of the Queen during the eleven years of the Royal couple's intimacy which followed the fall of the Duc de Bourbon and Madame de Prie. These eleven years and the eight months which went before have been called Marie Leczinska's happy years. But, after the first eight months, not a single week passed without her begging her husband to remember her, and flattering the old minister in order to find out how and where the King might be. Each fresh expectation of motherhood was cause for anxiety, too. She longed to give the King the son whom he wanted, and stern heaven only granted her daughters. The birth of the twins was followed in 1728 by that of another daughter. In 1729 Marie had the great joy of giving birth to the Dauphin Louis, and in 1730 to the Duc d'Anjou. But in March, 1732, the series of daughters began again. First came Madame Adélaïde; then, in May, 1733, Madame Victoire, in July, 1734, Madame Sophie, in May, 1736, Thérèse-Félicité, in July, 1737, Louise-Marie, who took the veil as a Carmelite in 1770. Neither could the Queen rear all her children. To her intense grief she lost the Duc d'Anjou on the 7th of April, 1733, while Thérèse-Félicité was to die later (September, 1744) at the Abbey of Fontevrault.

Notwithstanding the repeated birth of children, the estrangement of husband and wife became more pronounced each day. The King withdrew more and more from his Queen, for whom he seemed only to have a physical attraction. Marie no longer hoped to win

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the man whom she had only been able to love in her own awkward fashion and Louis XV submitted with unconscious impatience to a tie which only the deep sense of religion inculcated by Fleury made him respect and fretted at the bashfulness which he felt in the presence of women More and more he wearied of this virtuous wife who was incapable of holding him by coquetry whose pious reticences conflicted with his desires and who was listless from having brought so many children into the world As the Marquis d Argenson says in his *Mémoires* (Vol III) It was the descending scale the inevitable road pointing the way to new distractions

Marie had moreover lost the only beauty which she ever possessed the beauty of youth. Her thirty three years had been oppressed by continual child bearing which had left its traces on her face. Louis XV observed this and sought to supplement his conjugal joys by culinary pleasures He invented elaborate dishes concocted jams snacks and tit bits which after amusing him vastly made him very sick. He grew interested too in scandal and Court gossip and at last for the first time in his life dared to let his looks linger on pretty girls Watchful of the King's every gesture three women who were nearly related to him hastened without loss of time to initiate him into pleasures to which he was as yet a stranger

Thus it was that Louis XV was dragged into a vortex of select suppers and *parties carrees* and introduced to the intoxicating delights of women and wine. At one of these suppers in the year 1732 he toasted the Fair Unknown! whom everyone understood to be the chosen of the moment For some time past the Queen

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had been aware of the King's neglect, but she went in too much fear of him to utter reproaches. She redoubled her prayers and, with tears in her eyes, besought Fleury to bring back her husband. But the "Fair Unknown"¹ whom the King had chosen was approved by Fleury, because she did not meddle in politics. So Fleury remained impassive before the Queen's grief. Such callousness made Marie Leczinska indignant. For the first time she rebelled against her fate. She became violent, resentful, impatient. She expressed her hatred of the favourite and sought to do her an injury. But the fit was transitory. Her respect for and gratitude to the King, the survival of her affection for him notwithstanding the disappointments which he inflicted, her thought for her own dignity, and her deep religious faith, soon brought her to a state of heroic resignation in which she walked softly and gently from one sacrifice to another.

Henceforward, when the King entered the *salon* he no longer went up to the Queen's table. Occasionally the courtiers, who modelled their behaviour on that of the monarch's, multiplied their excuses for not playing cards with the Queen. The unhappy Sovereign might be seen running about the corridors of the palace seeking for partners whom she did not always find. One day Louis, absorbed in conversation with his favourite, kept the Queen standing for three-quarters of an hour before he remembered to give her permission to be seated. He became so harsh to her that Marie ended by no longer daring to speak to him and trembled at the sound of his voice. As by this time everyone knew that the Queen had no influence, she lived,

¹ See the chapter on *Three Ladies at Supper*

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abandoned by the Court in an isolated corner of the palace with the Duchesse de Noailles Moncrif her reader and Père Griffet a Jesuit Her only amusements were to spend an occasional evening with her faithful friends the Duc and Duchesse de Luynes and to keep up a regular correspondence with her father, who was so proud and so happy to see his daughter Queen of France! At the de Luynes one talked, while the dog, Tintamarre snored in the chimney-corner To Stanislas Marie would always appear contented even in the midst of the humiliations which her filial love suffered by reason of Fleury's despicable behaviour during the Polish war of succession These humiliations however were forgotten when Stanislas received the Duchy of Lorraine as compensation for his mortifications (1736) But despite all that she did the talk of the palace on the subject of the King's *amours* reached the ears of the person closest in her affections Louis having tired of his first favourite fell in love with her sister the ambitious and witty Comtesse de Vintimille. Death snatched her from him before she had attained her twentieth year (1741) Then the King became enamoured of another sister of the dead mistress the beautiful, proud Duchesse de Châteauroux With her the King had the illusion of glory but suddenly falling ill he was seized with the fear of hell which in the past Fleury had strongly inculcated and Marie Leczinska, summoned to her Royal spouse, had an opportunity of disputing the claims of his passing fancies (August, 1744) Nevertheless she had but one thought that of reconciling Louis to God

In her fervour as militant Christian she desired that all traces of her husband's faults should be expunged.

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Encouraged by the Queen, the Royal confessor, Père Pérusseau, demanded the expulsion of the Duchesse de Châteauroux, and of her sister, the Duchesse de Lauragais, before administering the blessed sacrament to the King. When Louis made his confession, his confessor insisted that he should publicly renounce his *amours*, and it was the Archbishop of Soissons who, by request of the Queen, solicited in the King's name public pardon for his faults. Such noisy and clumsy zeal should have been veiled with great tenderness if Louis XV were to be brought back to Marie Leczinska, but the Queen was merely virtuous. When the King was restored to health and tried to be to her what he once had been, she closed her door against him. She was never again to have an opportunity of refusing her husband. Soon the Marquise de Pompadour was to reign at Court and the shadowy form of the Queen to recede further and further into the background.¹

Marie, humiliated at Court, was saddened also by her successive bereavements. The death (23rd of February, 1766) of her well-beloved father, who was burnt in the superb dressing-gown which she had so delighted in presenting to him, was an acute sorrow. She had never got over the grief caused by the death of her children, and it was the last straw when her husband sent his daughters to be educated at the Abbey Fontevrault. The favourite was such an expense that the King could not afford to have the Daughters of France educated at Versailles.

One day Louis inflicted Madame de Pompadour on Marie Leczinska as lady-in-waiting. The Queen submitted, merely observing "I have a heavenly King

¹ See the chapter on the *Marquise de Pompadour*.

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who consoles me for all my ills and an earthly King whom I shall always obey' It was in this strong Christian attitude that Marie Leczinska the humiliated and resigned wife, the sorely tried mother the neglected Queen after suffering much, after loving and succouring the poor and praying for sinners, passed away at Versailles on the 24th of June 1768 without anything appearing to be changed by her death.

THREE LADIES AT SUPPER

AFTER witnessing a performance of *Polyeucte*, Madame de Sévigné in a communicative, puzzled frame of mind spoke of the heroine, observing to her friends "There was a good woman who did not love her husband" Our own frame of mind is akin to that of the charming Marquise when we consider the behaviour of the Comtesse de Toulouse in relation to her nephew, King Louis XV Astonished and perplexed likewise, we are tempted to exclaim "There was a virtuous woman who left nothing undone to alienate her royal nephew from his wife and to drag him into dissipations!"

It was about 1730 that the Comtesse de Toulouse appears to have gained a real influence over the affections and life of Louis XV She was at this time one of the greatest ladies at Court, and also one of the most highly esteemed Daughter of Anne, Maréchal Duc de Noailles, and of Marie-Françoise de Bourneville, Marie-Victoire-Sophie de Noailles was born on the 6th of May, 1688 In 1709, when a little over twenty, she married the Marquis de Gondrin, Louis de Pardaillan d'Antin, grandson of Madame de Montespan and the Marquis de Montespan, her husband The young wife brought a handsome dowry to the Marquis de Gondrin, many qualities, rare virtues, and a beauty which everyone declared to be remarkable

The reputation of the de Noailles for bravery and loyalty, as well as their old title, which dated back to

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the Crusades still further enhanced the worth of the young Marquise and made the Marquis justly proud of her while that perfect and ambitious courtier his stepfather promised himself all kinds of favours from such a marriage. But this union lasted too short a time for Louis de Pardaillan d'Antin to gain the glory and pleasures from it that he had anticipated or for his father to use it as an opportunity to obtain fresh privileges. The young Marquis died less than three years after his marriage to Marie-Victoire and at the age of twenty four the Marquise was left a widow with a son under two years old.

But Madame de Gondrin was too distinguished and too charming to remain for long unnoticed and without arousing love in the hearts of her friends. After a long year of widowhood given over to repining and mourning the dead Marie-Victoire yielded to the entreaties of her dearest friend Mademoiselle de Charolais and repaired to Versailles where she began to go into society and to receive her friends. Almost at once one of them began to pay her the most marked attention. He was happy only when in her presence and fell into a state of melancholy when parted from her. This fond and susceptible friend whose rapture and admiration for the Marquise grew with each day was no less a personage than a prince namely Louis Alexandre Comte de Toulouse born on the 6th of June 1678 the youngest son of Louis XIV and the Marquise de Montespan. When his father legitimized him he was given the prerogatives of a Prince of the Blood and he was loved and honoured by all who came in contact with him. He was still quite young when Louis XIV wished him to take part in the War of the League of Augsburg and

COMTESSE DE TOULOUSE

the young Prince distinguished himself by his valour and initiative. Of all Louis XIV's sons, he was, perhaps, the most brilliant in war. The Comte de Toulouse combined with his military qualities all the virtues of peace and the gifts which make a good subject and a devoted and worthy head of a family. Saint-Simon, who was not tender towards Louis' legitimized children, says of him. "He won all hearts by his gentle, gracious manners, his justice and his liberality" Such was the Prince who loved the Marquise de Gondrin, and who soon became passionately enamoured of her. Through Madame de Montespan he was uncle to the Marquis de Gondrin, and so from the very beginning of his passion for the young widow, his relationship was his excuse for visiting her more often than a mere friend. In a very short time love, which he awakened in her, rendered further excuse unnecessary.

Indeed, proud as were the superb dark eyes of the Marquise, they soon expressed nothing but tenderness and passion for the Comte de Toulouse. Her lovely mouth, a perfect cupid's bow embellished with pearly-white teeth, opened graciously to welcome the Count and talk on his favourite subjects. Madame de Gondrin's whole person seemed affected and regenerated by the passion which she both inspired and felt. Her face, slightly too round, with cheeks which were a little too plump, grew more refined under the influence of her love, her smile became still more charming, her colour, which was rather too high, toned down, while her bosom, her arms and her hands kept that beauty which often caused her to be compared with a magnificent statue. Like the lovely statues of antiquity, the Marquise de Gondrin had a well-developed figure and was above the

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average in height with a noble carriage and a dignified walk. Her whole person bore the stamp of distinction and was tinged with something of majesty and command. The Marquise was also one of the wittiest the most agreeable and best educated women at Court it was indeed her excellent education which differentiated her most from her great friend Mademoiselle de Charolais and which contributed to make two totally dissimilar women of these intimate friends

The Comte de Toulouse would have liked to marry the young widow directly he knew that she loved him. But Philippe d Orléans was governing the kingdom as Regent of France at the time and all were aware that he desired to take advantage of every opportunity to deprive Louis XIV's legitimized sons of their various prerogatives On the 15th of September 1715 Philippe had made Parliament annul Louis XIV's will which entrusted the command of the Household troops as well as the guardianship and education of the young King to the Duc du Maine the eldest brother of the Comte de Toulouse and in 1717 he deprived this same Duke of all the prerogatives of a Prince of the Blood The Comte de Toulouse reflected that the Regent might take it into his head to strip the House of Toulouse of its privileges as he had done in the case of the House of Maine if the head of this House should attract attention by marrying He therefore deemed it prudent to defer his marriage and the Marquise shared his point of view It was for this reason that they continued to love one another in secret awaiting a more favourable time for their union and in the meantime seeking oblivion Far from intriguing after the manner of the Duc de Maine whose proposal to enter into the conspiracy

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which was being hatched with Spain, he indignantly repulsed, the Comte de Toulouse withdrew more and more from public affairs, finding consolation for his inactivity in the love of the beautiful Marquise. But the Regent was scarcely dead (1723) before he besought Madame de Gondrin to become his Princess ; and they soon made the happiest of homes for themselves. The Comte de Toulouse by his patience, prudence, loyalty and skill had preserved all its prerogatives for his House. He was the only one of the children of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan to enjoy all the advantages of a Prince of the Blood, and to be treated as such.

Madame de Gondrin was nearly twenty-six when she became Princess, but her beauty had never been more wonderful, nor herself more in love. Her husband was the happiest of men when he raised her to his rank, and the burning love which he had dedicated to her for a long time past could but grow stronger during their years of married life. Not only was the Comte de Toulouse absolutely faithful to his Countess, but he found a voluptuous pleasure in being so. The mutual affection of the wedded pair seemed to increase day by day. The only sorrows of this perfect couple were the loss of several children. The Comte and Comtesse de Toulouse had a numerous family ; but in spite of their efforts and devotion they only reared one child, who became later the Duc de Penthièvre, and in this ~~dear~~ young life were centred all their interests and hopes.

Such was the woman who, towards 1730, strove, in concert with her friend, Mademoiselle de Charolais, to give Louis XV a taste for foolish pleasures and distracting love affairs. It is but fair to observe that Mademoiselle de Charolais was ~~engaged~~ ~~in~~

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woman to delight in such a task. But it is no less accurate to add that the King's estrangement from Marie Leczinska was in the beginning more the work of the Comtesse de Toulouse than that of Mademoiselle de Charolais

Louise-Anne de Bourbon called Mademoiselle de Charolais was born on the 23rd of June 1695 at Chantilly. She was the third of the six daughters of Louis de Bourbon and Mademoiselle de Nantes his wife, and at the same time a descendant of Louis XIV and the Condé-Bourbon. She was Louis XIV's grand-daughter through her mother offspring of the King's *amours* with Madame de Montespan and a Condé-Bourbon through her father son of a first cousin of the victor of Rocroi who like his cousin was called Duc d'Enghien. Mademoiselle de Charolais got her wit beauty and vices from both sides but almost all their virtues passed her by. She had been very much attached to the Comtesse de Toulouse ever since the latter's widowhood but nothing cemented the friendship between the two Princesses more firmly than their design to introduce the King to a new life. It is difficult to understand the intense friendship of these two women, for not only was Mademoiselle de Charolais completely different from the Comtesse de Toulouse but she was as uncircum- spect in her behaviour as her friend was dignified of exemplary conduct and religiously inclined.

It was in 1715 that Mademoiselle de Charolais definitely threw off all constraint so that she might freely indulge her love of violent pleasures and excitement. From this time forward her instinct and caprice were her only guides. She loved just as often as the fancy took her. She had numerous lovers whom

MADEMOISELLE DE CHAROLAIS

she left as airily as she took them. The Duc de Melun, the Chevalier de Bavière, the Prince de Dombes, the Comte de Coigny, and above all the Duc de Richelieu, always remained her favourites The Princess Palatine wrote on the 1st of October, 1719, with reference to the Princess's love for Richelieu : " Mademoiselle declared before everybody that she was as much in love as a cat with the Duc de Richelieu " But this love did not make her at all jealous , for, when someone remarked that the Duke had half-a-dozen mistresses at the same time, she replied ecstatically . " True ! He keeps mistresses merely to give them up for me and to tell me what goes on among them " This did not prevent the youthful Princess from saying to Richelieu " Always be just such a lover and you will be the most adorable of men " It was but natural that such daring manners and sensual *amours* should be freely attacked in lampoons

" If frisky and young Charolais,"
runs one of them,

" For Richelieu love doth display,
Why, 'tis bred in the bone ,
But what trouble for one,
When her mother had more
At her age than a score ! " ¹

Mademoiselle de Charolais followed only too closely the example of Mademoiselle de Nantes, her mother, and if she had not half-a-dozen lovers at one and the same time, almost every year and without making any great

¹ " *Que Charolais jeune et fringante,
Pour Richelieu soit complaisante,
N'est-ce pas le sort de son sang ?
Mais pour un seul c'est bien la peine,
Quand, à son âge, sa maman
En avait plus de deux douzaines !* "

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secret of it she brought a child into the world. The event would take place at the Château de Madrid her usual residence. For six weeks Mademoiselle de Charolais would give out that she was ill and almost the whole Court would send to enquire without however, pressing to know the nature of her complaint. But one year the porter was changed a day or two before the expected birth. No one had time to inform him of the etiquette of the castle so when three days after the baby's arrival a footman came to enquire on behalf of his mistress how Mademoiselle de Charolais was progressing the porter conscientiously replied 'The Princess is going on as well as can be expected, and the child also'

These repeated exertions did not prevent Mademoiselle de Charolais from preserving her dazzling beauty. Endowed with delightful dark eyes as sparkling with mischief as they were provocatively charming she had a ravishing little red mouth with lips half parted in a voluptuous smile which made one want to close them with a kiss. Her complexion had the brilliance and freshness of June roses and her whole person was as lively and graceful as a kitten's. But this kitten had claws which could scratch on occasion for Mademoiselle was full of spirits and loved making fun of everyone. She was besides very amusing, her way of turning everything into ridicule was unique unexpected and so droll that one could not help laughing. The only unpleasing thing about her was the contemptuous haughty air which she often affected. But when she condescends to a little coquetry she is indeed charming', writes the Duc de Richelieu in his *Mémoires*. In short Mademoiselle de Charolais combined the arrogance of



LOUISE ANNE DE BOURBON, PRINCESS OF THE BLOOD, called
MADEMOISELLE DE CHAROLAIS

Born June 1695 died 1758

From the portrait by Boucher of Mademoiselle de Charolais as a Franciscan monk

MADEMOISELLE DE CHAROLAIS

the Condés, the wit of the Montemarts, the capricious daring and extravagant disposition of Madame de Montespan, and Mademoiselle de Nantes' thirst for pleasure with a boldness all her own

Prompted by this boldness, Mademoiselle de Charolais adored shocking the proprieties. One sees her, for example, being painted several times as a nun so that she may give her portrait to her lovers. On the 31st of March, 1719, the Princesse Palatine stated that the Princess was painted as a Franciscan nun in order that she might be included in the series of the Duc de Richelieu's mistresses. Later, Boucher painted her as a Grey Friar, making her appear infinitely attractive beneath the coarse serge habit of the order. Voltaire probably had this portrait of Boucher's in mind when he wrote

“ Angelic Friar de Charolais,
Instead of Venus' girdle, why
About your waist, O tell us, pray,
St. Francis' hempen cord you tie ! ”¹

And yet it was with this madcap Princess that the dignified, virtuous and pious Comtesse de Toulouse plotted to draw the King far from the Queen's Court and to initiate him into the pleasures of late suppers, washed down with every kind of generous wine, as well as to the delights of gay and unconventional society.

But the two friends proceeded with deliberation. Despite their ardent desire to relieve the King's boredom, perhaps, as has been claimed, in order to prevent him from falling into worse habits, the Comtesse

¹ “ *Angé Frère de Charolais,
Dis-nous par quelle aventure
Le cordon de saint François
Sert à Venus de ceinture !* ”

THREE LADIES AT SUPPER

de Toulouse and Mademoiselle de Charolais only meddled in the King's life by slow degrees. At first they merely sought to influence him through the attractions of the Court of Rambouillet:

The Comte and Comtesse de Toulouse had made this superb abode and beautiful demesne the society refuge of all those who regretted the lost grandeur of the age of Louis XIV. At Rambouillet the lofty speech, the distinguished manners and gestures of the *grand siècle* had been retained. Whereas at Versailles, woman was enjoyed and not respected at Rambouillet she was respected more than she was allowed to be loved at any rate openly. At Rambouillet life, luxury, wit and learning were savoured fastidiously like some delicate exhalation or perfume. Everything was in good taste, slightly pedantic, harmonious, discreet and yet magnificent. One breathed there an air to be found nowhere else which recalled that of the rich communities wherein society men and women withdrew to serve their God while at the same time ministering to their need of an ideal and refinement if love-making did not occupy the predominant place in their thoughts. But the love-making of Rambouillet differed in every respect from that at Versailles. There it was pervasive without being insistent, pleasant without being distracting, witty without being brilliant, soothing, stimulating. It had like the beautiful mistress of the house, a unique charm of mysticism of grandeur and of learning. Under the influence of this atmosphere Mademoiselle de Charolais appeared at Rambouillet as she appeared nowhere else — she jested without being audacious and was smart, agreeable and gay without ever overstepping

¹ The Château of Rambouillet was bought by Louis XVI in 1776

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the limits imposed by good education and unerring taste

Thus at Rambouillet there was nothing to alarm Louis XV, nothing to worry him, or to make him look small, as happened, for instance, at all ambassadorial levées where nervousness prevented him from speaking with assurance and made him stammer at every word. Neither had he any occasion to fear temptations which might prove prejudicial to his conjugal fidelity, or embarrassing obsessions. This Prince, who loved on such rare occasions, and only by fits and starts, or by habit, who all his life was first and foremost the indolent egoist into which he had developed as a result of the incapable Villeroy's foolish, inadequate education and Fleury's ambition, found at Rambouillet a delightful *milieu*, well-informed and restful, which, far from alarming or making him nervous, made him think without mental exertion, created the illusion of an energy which others expended for him and supplied him with the charm of emotions at once voluptuous, religious and artistic. Louis, without admitting to himself the extent of Rambouillet's influence and attraction, yielded to the allurements of the Court of Madame de Toulouse, and deserted the Queen. He emerged from his state of melancholy and assumed the air of a busy and happy man. The Comtesse de Toulouse managed to give him the illusion that he was working. She prejudiced him against Chauvelin, whom the de Noailles detested and determined at all costs to prevent from becoming Fleury's successor, and Louis thought he was doing the work of a King by considering how best he could deprive this minister of power.

Louis very soon ceased to confine his visits to the

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Court at Rambouillet He grew more and more bold and gradually began to visit the castles of the friends of Madame de Toulouse and of Mademoiselle de Charolais He might be seen at Bagatelle making merry or amusing himself with the Maréchale d'Estrees often going to La Muette the nearest of all his estates to Mademoiselle de Charolais charming *palais* At Madrid it was not long before the King remained to supper which the high spirits and songs of Mademoiselle de Charolais, as well as champagne and love made a wildly riotous meal. Louis delighted in these suppers at which even the beautiful, stately Comtesse de Toulouse who on these occasions was nicknamed "*Fortunée*", deigned to enjoy herself with the utmost abandon amid the crowd of young beauties who followed everywhere in her train These enter tainments were a real revelation to the King and he brought to them an animation of which one would not have suspected him an almost infantile mirth and indulged in salles of wit which rivalled those of Mademoiselle de Charolais

Louis had now passed far beyond the stage when he had pronounced Marie Leczinska to be the loveliest woman in France Mademoiselle de Charolais con sidered the time had arrived to 'debauch' him as she expressed it Better fitted than anyone to win masculine hearts this *garçon* who was a woman in sex and beauty only found it *piquant* and pleasant to be the first to draw the King from the straight and narrow way She was at the time (1732) thirty-seven that is to say fifteen years older than the King but her face was as dazzlingly fresh and youthful as at twenty her grace was sprightly and her dark eyes as sparkling with mischief

MADEMOISELLE DE CHAROLAIS

and love. With more truth now than when he had first been smitten the discarded lover might exclaim :

“ The eyes of my Iris
Are doorways twain,
Wheron ‘ room to let ’ is
Written most plain ! ”¹¹

Mademoiselle de Charolais inflamed the King by a thousand coquettices and made him participate in her love of the table and the bottle.

“ She can drink a great deal of wine without being intoxicated ”, writes La Palatine. The King was bewildered by her adventurous spirit and bold beauty, and her inconstancies horrified him. He was amused by her natural, racy wit, which made her the best raconteur of the broad stories of the period and of gossip after the fashion of Voltaire’s tales. He was to a certain degree even fascinated by her mode of life and her absolute unscrupulousness, which made d’Argenson write : “ If Mademoiselle had been born among the people she would have been a receiver of stolen goods, a thief, or a flower-girl.” But he never had the smallest feeling of love for her. Mademoiselle de Charolais, piqued, but imagining that the King must be on the verge of loving someone, slipped into the young monarch’s pocket some lines inspired by the occasion

“ How bashful you are, and how staid !
How alluring your eyes soft glow !
So youthful, and yet to evade
The darts of the god with the bow ?

¹¹ “ Les yeux de mon Iris
Sort deux portes enchartes
Où l’on voit en escrit ;
‘ Appartement à faire ! ’ ”

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If Cupid to teach you desires
Submit, opposition remove
For long ere the reign of your Sires
He ruled in the kingdom of love ¹

It was the spirit of intrigue much more than love or ambition which made Mademoiselle de Charolais try to win the game. Herein she differed widely from the Comtesse de Toulouse with whom at the time she monopolized the King's mind and favour. Mademoiselle de Charolais sought to corrupt him for the mere pleasure of doing so. Fleury was not alarmed for he felt sure of the Comtesse de Toulouse and relied on her to prevent all serious or harmful indiscretions. Although he was aware that the Countess enjoyed managing men and affairs he entertained no fears that she would undermine his authority. Madame was too good a diplomatist to make an attack on so powerful a force as the Cardinal.

Some months however after the vain attempts of Mademoiselle de Charolais to besiege Louis heart d'Argenson noticed almost every morning fresh tracks of carriage wheels running from La Muette to Madrid. As the avenues which connected the two castles were always closed to the public d'Argenson was forced to conclude that the marks which he had observed could only have been made by the Royal carriage. But if the King were going to Madrid by stealth it must mean that his heart had been captured by one of the women

¹ *Vous êtes l'honneur sauvage
Et le regard séduisant
Si pourraut il qu'à votre Age
Vous fussiez indifférent?
Si l'amour croit vous instruire
Cides ne disputer rien
On a fondé votre empire
Bien longtemps après le sien!*

MADEMOISELLE DE CHAROLAIS

who lived there. Perhaps by Mademoiselle de Charolais, perhaps by one of her friends .

D'Argenson had reached this point in his reflections when one evening at Madrid in the autumn of 1732 Louis, merrier and in higher spirits than he had hitherto been at any supper-party, gaily and unblushingly proposed the toast “to the Fair Unknown ! ” The company, both male and female, who for weeks had been taking stock of the state of Louis XV's affections and speculating as to the date of a love *dénouement* which should transform the Prince's life, gathered that “the Fair Unknown” had brought this *dénouement* about. But who could she be ? Louis took a delight in exciting general curiosity on the subject, even going so far as to suggest that the men present should guess her name A vote was immediately taken and seven out of twenty-four named Mademoiselle de Charolais

But this high-spirited Princess was not the Beauty who had touched the King's heart. She, through whom the King understood for the first time what the Président Hénault expressed so picturesquely in his *Mémoires* when he said “Marie Leczinska always had the mind and face of an old woman,” had neither the ambition nor the rank of Mademoiselle de Charolais Thrust forward by her friends, and by Madame de Toulouse in particular, she inspired confidence in everyone because it was recognized that she had no wish either to rule or to domineer, and that she was to be trusted Nevertheless, her friends took the precaution to make her promise that she would rest content with the sole honour of being loved by the King and that she would attempt nothing with him without first consulting those persons to whom she owed affection The

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future favourite accepted this singular treaty and had religiously to observe it as long as she enjoyed the King's favour. For the present he was satisfied with loving her in secret. He even blushed at the mention of her name and took great care to preserve appearances, for he did not desert the Queen until after the birth of Madame Louise (July 1737) whom he nicknamed 'Madame Dernière' ('The Last') in consequence of the affront twice put upon him by the Queen in refusing to allow him to enter her bedroom. The favourite, Julie de Mailly, was the eldest daughter of the Marquis and Marquise de Nesle whose title dated back to the eleventh century and the poor neglected wife of a dissipated husband her first cousin, the Comte de Mailly to whom she had been married by force at the age of sixteen. She asked nothing better than to be allowed to show Louis how much she loved him. When the King first noticed her, it was she who made all the advances at their early meetings and although years had passed since they had exchanged their first kisses Julie de Mailly remained the bolder and more enticing of the two. She was a thin beauty with a provocative and sensuous charm. It is perhaps difficult to say that she was really beautiful but her dark eyes were magnificent although a little hard her face a perfect oval and her rouged cheeks and strongly marked black eyebrows were striking and arrested attention. She had the fearless bearing the bold and mesmeric grace of a Bacchante. She was the true type of a woman of the Regency. She knew too how to dress possessing more than anyone else the gift of adapting the fashions to suit herself and of designing the most piquant and suggestive negligées. Every evening she re-dressed her



JULIE, COMTESSE DE MAILLY

Eldest daughter of the Marquis and Marquise de Nesle Mistress of Louis the XVth 1732-1742
Born 1710 died 1751

Source of this print unknown

MADAME DE MAILLY

hair for bed and decked herself out in all her diamonds. In the morning, too, she was especially fascinating with her beautiful black hair uncurled, but enhanced by the fire of the diamonds encircling her broad, high forehead. Unfortunately, her arms and bosom were ugly ; her legs, too thin and too long, gave her a somewhat masculine walk.

But Madame de Mailly made up for these physical imperfections by innumerable qualities. She was very witty, and even more affectionate. Her devotion to her friends knew no bounds. She was always ready to sacrifice herself on their behalf. A firm friend, a passionate and sincere mistress, her good temper was unvarying, and her greatest pleasure was to amuse her company. At the supper-parties none knew better than she how to create a cheery atmosphere in the *salons* or at table. A charming and captivating toper, she excelled at the nocturnal entertainments where, unlike Mademoiselle de Charolais, for example, she never allowed herself to shine at the expense of others. She was always generous and sympathetic ; even pleasure, of which she was an ardent devotee, was powerless to hold her back if another's welfare was in question. She was, besides, totally unambitious and disinterested. She wanted nothing but the love of Louis XV, whom she adored with all the strength of her passionate nature. But it was her very qualities which one day were to estrange the King, for, since she was incapable of anything resembling caprice, he ended by finding her dull. Meanwhile, he was grateful for her adoration, for her readiness to share his love, and for her disinterestedness. He was grateful to her also for having a certain fear of Fleury and for

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not causing anyone uneasiness, so modest were her style and pretensions

It was not until the beginning of 1738 that the Court learnt for certain Madame de Mailly's relations with the King. One evening as the young woman stole secretly through the private apartments at Versailles to spend the night there that great and important personage François-Gabriel Bachelier the *valet* as it were by accident knocked off the hood which concealed the favourite's face. As a matter of fact Bachelier wanted to get the lady into his power by making her position public and definite. To this end he contrived that two ladies who like Madame de Mailly were attached to the Queen's suite should see and recognize the favourite at the moment when she was hoodless. The stratagem succeeded and the day following the adventure the two ladies who had recognized Madame de Mailly spread the news throughout the Court. After this decisive step Louis XV no longer hesitated to acknowledge the truth with regard to Madame de Mailly. This important determination marks the complete rupture between Louis XV's old and new life. From this day as long as he enjoyed good health he never thought of returning to a regular life.

The King at the time availed himself of the facilities afforded by the new situation to go openly on the 14th of July 1738 and sup with Madame de Mailly at Compiègne. This was so to speak publicly to declare his passion. And he did not repent it either for never had Madame de Mailly been more amusing nor more fascinating. She was now ready to introduce her merry makings into the private apartments of the Royal castles at Versailles, Choisy and La Muette. She drew

MADAME DE MAILLY

there all those who had taken part in the festivities at Madrid and Rambouillet, and made pleasure very much at home in singing the praises of Bacchus and Venus Moutier, whom Louis had lured at an exorbitant price from Monsieur de Nevers, almost at the same time that Madame de Mailly became favourite, served dishes at these suppers as choice as they were highly seasoned, which stimulated both the appetite and the desire for wine. One enjoyed oneself at the King's parties as unrestrainedly and as wildly as at those of Mademoiselle de Charolais.

But occasionally Madame de Mailly would appear at the entertainment with red eyes. This is accounted for by the fact that very early Louis, forgetful of the devotion of this disinterested woman who had nothing but debts and preferred no requests, made her suffer so that he might be revenged for the humiliations inflicted on his *amour-propre* by derogatory remarks concerning his mistress's beauty. The Court, the satirists, and her husband also, made merry at his expense. People said that the lady was exceedingly dark, not very young, nor very pretty. A certain Monsieur de Luc, when writing to Madame de Mailly to ask her to get a situation for one of his men, ended his letter with these words: "It needs but one word from the beautiful mouth of a lovely lady like yourself and the business is done." The King, having read the letter, ejaculated: "A beautiful mouth, indeed! I scarcely think you can plume yourself on that!"

The King's state of mind caused Madame de Mailly to be jealous of all the pretty women who approached the monarch, even of the Duchesse d'Antin, the daughter-in-law of the Comtesse de Toulouse. It soured her

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too so much so that one day when Louis was watching her lose at cards she remarked in bitter and aggressive tones ' It is not to be wondered at, with *you* here ' Another day, when the King threatened to tell Fleury something she replied Will you never get rid of this bad habit ?

And yet the poor woman was good very good, and very affectionate she had to suffer not only Louis XV's contempt and indirect reproaches but the annoyance of obscure rivals of her own sisters even the loveliest of whom succeeded in ousting her from Court ¹

So of our three ladies at supper, Madame de Mailly, who was the most affectionate and the least selfish got nothing but bitterness and disappointment from her pleasures Mademoiselle de Charolais the wildest fell out with the Comtesse de Toulouse after the death of the Count in 1737 but none the less continued until the end to derive the most hilarious enjoyment from her life of pleasure She died on the 8th of April 1758 at the age of sixty three almost entirely unacquainted with sorrow and completely unrepentant. The Comtesse de Toulouse was able to take advantage of her relationship to and friendship with Louis to procure for the Duc de Penthièvre, her son the reversion of all his father's offices and to effect the recall from exile of the Duc d'Antin, her eldest son by her first marriage who had compromised himself in a plot against Fleury She even retained at Court the entire suite of rooms which had been occupied by her husband, the Prince A faithful friend to Madame de Mailly it was she who succoured her in distress helped her to fight her troubles and to seek in religion her supreme consolation.

¹ See the chapter on *The Duchesse de Chartres*

THE DUCHESSE DE CHÂTEAUROUX

As soon as Marie Leczinska's clumsy interference on behalf of the Duke of Bourbon and Madame de Prie¹ had jeopardized the warm love which the young Louis XV had at first vowed to his twenty-two-year old Queen, matters were made much worse by Marie's inexperience in love, the boredom which her conversation inflicted upon the King, Fleury's advice, feminine influence at Court, the courtier's ambitions, Louis' political idleness and the intrigues of the subalterns. The King soon broke away from a Princess who could not entertain him and for whom he felt only a slight physical attraction. In 1732, Marie Leczinska was superceded by the "Fair Unknown"² and in 1742, before her very eyes, Louis set up another powerful feminine personality, who soon relegated the Queen to the background.

Marie-Anne de Mailly de Nesle, who was afterwards Duchess of Châteauroux, had married on June 19th, 1734, Jean Baptiste Louis, Marquis of Nesle, captain in the Royal Etranger Regiment. She was left a widow on November 23rd, 1740, and came to Court through the influence of her sister, Mme. de Mailly, who at the time was in high favour with the King. Mme de Mailly was so devoted to her family that she was ready to perform any service for them. She was a loving, sincere little

¹ See chapter on *Marie Leczinska*, p. 1

² See chapter on *Three Ladies at Supper*, p. 23

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creature with all the qualities of an easy dupe, and she was happy to introduce her sisters at Court for the sole reason that it gave them pleasure. As early as 1739 she came near to losing the Royal favour through the machinations of the wittiest of her sisters, Pauline Adélaïde Félicité de Mailly, whom Louis XV had married to the Marquis de Vintimille Comte de Luc, nephew of the Archbishop of Paris. This woman heedless of her sister's kindness had done her best to precipitate the favourite's disgrace, and only her sudden death at the age of twenty nine (September, 1741) spared that loving heart such grievous agony. But Mme. de Mailly was so incorrigibly devoted to her own people that this lesson taught her nothing, and after the death of Mme. de Vintimille she lavished her family affection on two other sisters the Marquise de la Tournelle and Mme. de Flavaucourt whom she helped to shine and make themselves agreeable at Court.

Yet those on whom she had wasted her kindness were by no means as disinterested as she was. Marie-Anne de Nesle de la Tournelle daughter of a man who had wasted his substance on actresses and the capricious requirements of Court life and widow of a fortuneless soldier sought wealth and power. She had urged Mme. de Mailly to present her to the King with the sole object of supplanting her, and all the time that she was cajoling her sister into allowing her to share this Court life she was counting upon that kind heart and lack of perspicacity to help her to gain her ends. She hoped too that the King would easily fall a victim to her beauty.

And magnificently beautiful she was. More than common tall utterly desirable lithe and graceful and



MARIE ANNE DE MAILLY DE NESLE, DUCHESSE DE CHÂTEAUBOURG

DUCHESSE DE CHÂTEAUROUX

so pleasingly dignified, so witty even in her gestures and bearing that her beauty and youthful charm were unrivalled. But there was nothing grandiose or severe in this beauty. It was mutinous, alluring, sparkling, enchanting. Among its rarest and most personal charms, were a complexion so white and pure that it glowed, two large eyes, blue and bewitching, a child-like smile and the most mobile of expressions, passing in quick transition from passion to malice, tenderness to gaiety, mockery to pity. Add to these charms, a pair of bright red lips, forever dewy and fresh, lovely fair hair, a wonderful bosom, always gently heaving, and the art of fascinating without effort. Madame de la Tournelle's brilliant wit never humiliated her listeners, for though her shafts were winged with irony, they were hurled so daintily that one forgot the sting. It was almost as though her wit sprang straight from the heart. What wonder that such a woman stirred the Court's imagination as soon as she made her appearance.

Now, many people thought that Mme. de Mailly was so deeply in love with Louis that she could do nothing without asking his advice and yet the bellicose, restless young nobles of France needed the support of the King's mistress if they were to succeed in forcing Louis into a political action which old Fleury, his all-powerful minister, disapproved of and fought with every weapon and with all his strength. Fleury, thrifty to the point of stinginess, mean, stubborn and ignorant of the true meaning of glory, had a passion for peace even at the price of national dignity, and the nobles were determined to prevent France from being humiliated. One of the most active opponents of Fleury's policy was the Maréchal de Richelieu, who had obtained favourable

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terms of peace for France in a treaty of 1729 and later in 1733 had distinguished himself under Marshal Berwick at the sieges of Kehl and Philipsburg. He, together with the Prince de Soubise a personal friend of Louis XV, hit upon the notion of using the pretty Marquise de la Tournelle as a tool for destroying Fleury's influence.

At the time Richelieu had no idea of the Marquise's desires and ambitions, and at first he was somewhat concerned at the amorous interest which for several months she had been taking in the Duc d'Agénais, one of his nephews. If Madame de la Tournelle were to play the important part for which Richelieu and Soubise had cast her, she must be heart whole so the Maréchal made it his business to wean her from the Duc d'Agénais. The plot which he devised was simple, and such as a hero of gallant adventures might well imagine. He sent his nephew to Languedoc and arranged that very soon after the young man's arrival one of the prettiest women in the neighbourhood should flatter him with the most attentive advances and passionate glances. The Duc resisted these provocative attentions for barely a week. Just as he was tasting the happiness of surrender and enjoying the first thrill of his new passion he heard that the Marquise de la Tournelle, indignant at such a betrayal now felt nothing but rancour and bitterness for him.

Henceforth the Marquise was free for the part which Fleury's enemies wished her to play. She had already taken her place on the stage and through d'Argenson's influence had persuaded Louis to nominate her as *dame du palais* on the death of Madame de Mazarin (September 20th 1742). At the same time she had managed her sister so cleverly and had made others do the same

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that Madame de Mailly, partly from family feeling, and partly because she wanted to please Louis, whom she thought desirous of favouring Mesdames de la Tournelle and de Flavaucourt, had written to Cardinal Fleury resigning her post as *dame du palais* in favour of her sister Madame de Flavaucourt

When the Cardinal received Madame de Mailly's letter he was astounded. Through pure altruism or lack of perspicacity this woman, whom he had always admired for her freedom from political intrigue, was deliberately aiming a formidable blow at her own power. It almost meant her suicide as favourite and such a step was inexplicable to the old minister. He sent for Madame de Mailly and gave her the advice of a man whose conduct had never been actuated by disinterested motives. But Madame de Mailly was carried away by her devotion to her own people and would not listen. Maurepas, the Minister of the Navy, whose epigrams were soon to persecute the woman who took Madame de Mailly's place, said to her, "Madame, you do not know your sister, de la Tournelle, when you hand over your office to her, you may expect your dismissal from Court". But Madame de Mailly's resolution was not even shaken. She persisted in her astonishing sacrifice, and on the day following the arrangement, joyfully accompanied her sisters to thank the King and Queen for having graciously granted her request.

From that time onwards, Madame de Mailly ceased to have any official position at Court, while Madame de la Tournelle received more flattery and adulation every day. Louis could never resist a pretty babyish face.

¹ Quoted from *La Duchesse de Châteauroux et ses sœurs* by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt

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and those naughty blue eyes, so child like and capricious troubled his dreams so that he could not even speak of them with ease. He spared neither looks nor attentions to induce the young woman to make advances and he tried to show how tenderly and fondly and with what a loving welcome he would respond. But Madame de la Tournelle was not one of those who give themselves easily. If Louis wanted her he must win her and the conquest was going to be difficult. Madame already knew her conditions. The King could not hope for any favour until he had satisfied her very last desire. She would want titles and distinctions an income which would safeguard her future and an assurance that any children born of a *liaison* between herself and the King should be richly provided for and legitimized. But to begin with Louis must take the trouble to make himself loved.

Up to the present the King had merely met women who had been only too proud and happy if he had condescended to notice them. A simple gesture a wish expressed and his victims had fallen at his feet. Was it not to the caprice of this Royal passion that one of Louis best born subjects was to offer a daughter writing Sire accept her, I have brought her up to be worthy of your love. The demands made by the Marquise seemed to Louis as extraordinary as they were excessive. But the Marquise was very pretty, very witty and very amusing and, moreover the Duc de Richelieu had made up his mind that she should not be long in taking Madame de Mailly's place in the Royal favour. So the Duc stimulated the King's admiration for Madame de la Tournelle/ helped him to picture the joys of intimacy with such a woman the value of such

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a conquest and the efforts which it deserved. Louis, distinctly weary of a mistress whom he had had for ten years and who had never been beautiful, gradually yielded to the fascination of Madame de la Tournelle and to the desire which Richelieu had succeeded in awaking. He now began to pay court to the Marquise.

But at first the young woman listened to Louis' declarations with little more than a kindly condescension. She remained dignified and distant, ~~surpassing~~ him by her coldness. The courtiers, who buzzed all about the King's advances and the lady's ~~manners~~, hummed at court and sang in town :

"Come, come,
Mademoiselle!
Come, come."

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ruthless upbraidings reproaches and scorn The unfortunate mistress swallowed the insults listened the abuse and suffered every sort of cruelty without a word of complaint, fondly believing that in the end his sweetness tenderness and unselfishness would regain the King's heart She was ready to accept any compromise provided the King would keep her at his side But Louis was exasperated at this persistent love which merely fettered him and was perhaps the cause of the Marquise de la Tournelle's perpetual indifference for not only was that lady cold to his transports but she had not answered his impassioned letters He was now sick with love for the Marquise, and to win her he began to make offers and promises

This time he really seemed to have made some impression on his goddess and at last he dared to hope Henceforth his behaviour to Madame de Mailly grew more and more cruel. Long pauses heavy with threats for the poor woman hovered over all their meals together and when the King suddenly broke the silence Madame de Mailly was so unnerved that she burst into tears If the King's expression softened at these tears the adoring favourite would hope once more and struggle to recapture the passion which had fled As for Louis he could talk to her of nothing but his love for Madame de la Tournelle his hope that this love might be returned and his desire to remove any obstacle which might withhold it from him This being so Madame de Mailly had better make up her mind to go and the sooner she left the Court the better These words were always more than Madame de Mailly could bear and she would grovel at the King's feet imploring him to grant her a few more days, kissing the hem of his garments,

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and clinging to him in a frenzy of love and despair Convulsed by passion and grief she looked so piteous that Louis, weary of the whole painful business, would grant a few days reprieve, but at each repetition of the scene he accumulated a little more spite against this woman, who infuriated him because he had not enough energy to dismiss her on the spot.

Madame de la Tournelle had by this time promised to comply with Louis' wishes, for he was prepared to grant her all the splendour of a recognized favourite, namely a house as sumptuous as Madame de Montespan's had been, an establishment where she could entertain the King right royally, the power of cashing the King's notes at the Treasury, the title of duchess ; the guarantees, which she had named, in respect of the children born of the union ; and any such recognition as she might desire. But the first proof of love which the Marquise demanded was the immediate dismissal of Madame de Mailly.

On November 2nd, 1742, the furniture was removed from Madame de Mailly's rooms, which were next to the King's apartments, on the pretext that in future they were to be occupied by Madame de Flavaucourt, who was to sleep there that very night At this decision, the wretched woman was beside herself, but suffering seemed to inspire her and she managed to speak to Louis during supper, so touchingly and with such appeal, that he countermanded his orders and allowed the poor distracted creature to sleep for one more night in her own room The next day Madame de Mailly refused to recognize that Louis had only postponed her dismissal for one night

Meanwhile, her sister's procrastination was beginning

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to get on the Marquise de la Tournelle's nerves. The nobles too were impatient to celebrate the promotion of their chosen favourite, so the Duc de Richelieu undertook to speed the parting guest. He sought Madame de Mailly and spoke to her in very strong terms of the respect which she owed to her own dignity in the presence of a King who was discarding her, and whom duty obliged her to renounce. And Madame de Mailly vowed that even if death were the result she would give up the King. Richelieu had no sooner heard these welcome words than he rushed to report them to Louis XV, announcing that in view of the good news, he had managed to secure a promise from the Marquise de la Tournelle that she would meet the King that very night, provided the *rendezvous* were kept a secret and Louis were accompanied by the Duc de Richelieu. That was why the King went late that night to the Duc de Richelieu's house where he disguised himself. Later both men in fancy dress visited the Marquise.

But Madame de Mailly was still at Versailles. She now loved even the most trifling thing connected with the King, and leaving the palace seemed to her worse than death. She could bear the King's indifference and scorn more easily than the wrench of separation which she could not bring herself to face. The Duc de Richelieu was obliged to return to Flanders without seeing the complete success of his intervention, and the fair Marquise was enraged by the King's patience with his former favourite. All Madame de Mailly's associates, despite her invariable kindness, were longing for her to leave the Court and at last the time came when she could no longer delay her departure. Yet on that very day she managed to get the King to grant her the favour of

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one last intimate dinner. At the close of the evening, she left the room "with heaving bosom and eyes full of tears, almost mad with grief". The King came after her, trying to comfort her before he let her go. Once again he spoke to her in those sweet tones which used to charm her ears, but since this concession to his victim's grief proved ineffectual he whispered softly, "Till Monday". It was Saturday. The unexpected words were so radiant with hope, that they illumined the forty-eight hours which stood between Madame de Mailly and the reunion for which she longed, however short it might be. This comforting thought gave her courage to step resignedly into the carriage which her friend, the Comtesse de Toulouse had sent for her, and to allow herself to be taken, without a moan, to the rooms which the devoted Countess had prepared for her in her own mansion.

In the meantime, at Versailles Madame de la Tournelle had heard of the king's last act of kindness to her sister, and she gave free vent to her displeasure. She forthwith demanded that Louis should withdraw the promise, which he had made. So long as the King aspired to Madame de la Tournelle's favour, Madame de Mailly was not to return to Court. The fact that the new favourite had been seriously disturbed by her sister's procrastination is proved by a letter which she wrote two or three days after Madame de Mailly's departure to the Duc de Richelieu, whom she affectionately called "uncle" although he was in no way related to her. "Meuse has surely told you, uncle, of the trouble which I had in getting Madame de Mailly to budge" [November 1742]¹

¹ Autographs from the collection of M. A. Martin

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In this same letter Madame de la Tournelle complained that she could do nothing so long as Cardinal Fleury lived. No other document affords a better study of this heartless ambitious woman who was never moved by kind or disinterested impulses and so belied the exquisite promise of her bewitching charm. It shows all the self-assurance and impudence of this woman with whom success was everything who had all the cynicism of her own ingratitude and greed and whose calculations and reasoning were terrifying in their callousness.

Now that she was sure of being recognized as favourite and of dominating the King's will, the Marquise de la Tournelle sought to exasperate Louis' desire by delaying its fulfilment. She sought to make a docile, servile lover of the King by constantly putting off until the next day the realization of the promise made the day before, and so it was that she did not give him complete satisfaction until December 19th after which date she ostentatiously showed herself at the opera so that Louis' choice might be approved by the public. On December 22nd she took possession of the favourite's apartments and on January 19th 1742, gambling for the rank of duchess, she played her first card by cleverly arranging a match between Mademoiselle de Moncravel, her most devoted sister and the Duc de Launaguas. In order to give the bride a dowry the King decreed a sixty years extension of the tax imposed upon the Jews of Metz and offered in addition an appointment, on marriage as *dame du palais* to the Dauphine at a salary of two thousand francs a year over and above the six thousand five hundred francs which were his annual allowance to the demoiselles de Nesle.

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Even more important than this marriage was the death of Fleury, which occurred on January 29th, 1743. The late Cardinal's power now passed into the hands of the favourite and changed the whole course of her life.

Now that Louis XV was no longer subjected to the restraining influence of his former tutor, he could yield unreservedly to the demands of love. He could now be seen sitting at the same table as the favourite, drafting with her help letters to the Duc de Richelieu; curtailing his councils so as to give more time to love; attending his mistress's baths and sitting at her bedside while she was recovering from the fatigue of bathing, accepting nothing more than a place among those who formed her little court, passionately begging to be allowed to sup in her room, and overwhelmed with sorrow if she refused to share the Royal dinners.

But exacting as she was, the charming Marquise was a born diplomatist. She had the supreme cleverness never to question Louis on affairs of State and so the infatuated King was convinced that his pretty mistress took no interest in politics. The voluptuous nonchalance of her intimacy with him confirmed this opinion. The consequence was that he spoke with her of State affairs without apprehension, and even went so far as to consult her, nay, beg her to be so kind as to give him advice. In this way she slipped into the government at the King's request, without his being aware of it. Soon her gift of guessing the Monarch's likes and dislikes added considerably to her political influence. She spoke in favour of the men whom Louis XV liked, such as Orry, d'Argenson, and the Noailles in spite of their friendship for Madame de Mailly, until

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the King imagined that she was voicing his own ideas and grew accustomed to thinking that his mistress's opinion was his own. But the Marquise could not deceive Maurepas the minister who had so rightly judged her ambition from the very first days of Mme de Mailly's sacrifice. He and his friends never ceased from attacking her in those little rhymes which the revolutionaries were to call *les bleuettes de la liberté*, because they were the first verses which taught the French people not to respect the King and his friends.

Nevertheless, Maurepas' attacks did not prevent Louis from seizing the opportunity of a journey to Fontainebleau to establish Madame de la Tournelle's household, in the middle of September 1743 or from making her Duchesse de Châteauroux at the end of October in the same year. At that time too, Richelieu was appointed first gentleman of the Bed Chamber and the Parisians nicknamed him the President of La Tournelle.¹

The Duchy of Châteauroux represented an annual income of eighty five thousand francs and the new duchess would enjoy the same rights as the Maréchale de Duras, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, the Duchesse d'Agénais and the Duchesse de Lauraguais. She was presented on October 22nd 1743, but as early as the previous April the future Duchess had reorganized the society in the King's private apartments, or *cabinets* as they were called. She had made a point of introducing an element of amusement and gaiety. Before very long every guest had a nickname. She herself was known as "the princess" her sister, Madame de

¹ At this time La Tournelle was not only the name of the Marquise but of one of the French law courts over which a president presided.



MARQUISE DE FLAVACOURT

Fourth daughter of the Marquis and Marquise de Nesle
Born 1716

Print after Nallier's portrait

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Flavaucourt, was "the hen", and the Duchesse de Lauraguais the "Street of Evil Words". Indeed, of the three de Nesle sisters who were at Court, the Duchesse de Lauraguais was the most daring in sallies and the most entertaining in conversation. She it was who had amused Louis by producing nicknames for his guests during a supper. She called d'Argenson "the sucking calf", Monsieur de Florentin "the sucking pig", Monsieur de Maurepas "the spinning-cat", and Cardinal de Tencin "the ostrich", and many others had names which were equally picturesque. The Duchesse de Châteauroux had been not a little vexed at discovering so much wit in her sister, and any slight feeling of love which she may have had for Louis must be attributed to that jealousy which the Duchesse de Lauraguais, for all her ugliness, aroused in her.

Meanwhile, the time for mere pleasure and intrigue was past. Richelieu, Soubise and their friends wished to act and to make the King act. It was time that the Duchesse de Châteauroux should rouse him from his political indifference and physical apathy. It is said that Madame de Tencin originated the idea, which she communicated to Richelieu, of making Louis place himself at the head of his armies so as to give him prestige in the eyes of neighbouring nations and his own compatriots. If this be true, one can at least assert that without the Duchesse de Châteauroux such a plan could never have been carried out. If it meant the loss of that luxuriously voluptuous life, which she had created, it meant, too, a glorious satisfaction for her overweening pride, the culmination of her ambition, the superb joy of becoming a heroine. The Duchess made every effort to awaken the King's proper pride, to give

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him a sense of responsibility and to convince him that he owed it to himself to become a great king ' You are killing me,' cried Louis, appalled at her reproaches

Sire was the noble energetic answer, ' a King must come to life again ! ' The Duchess already saw herself riding beside the King triumphant through her advice the refrains of those verses which Maurepas and her other enemies had hurled against her drowned by the enthusiastic *te deums* ' of victory She rehearsed to the King the applause with which his people would greet him if he were to fight for them, the adoration and devotion of his own countrymen and the anger of his enemies And Louis always fascinated by the dazzling young Duchess, allowed himself to be convinced did as she asked and took command of the army

This year 1744 saw the Duchesse de Châteaurox at the zenith of her popularity and glory but it was also the period of her misfortune In April Louis made the Duchess Superintendent of the Household to the Dauphine and inspired by her left for the seat of war Before very long the Duchess began to play an active part in the events of the day conducting interviews deciding alliances and receiving in person the thanks of Frederick of Prussia. Very soon too she joined the King who was with his army at Dunkerque and shared the ovations which he received The reality must have surpassed her most ambitious dreams

But in the full tide of her happiness when her triumph was at its height a cry of alarm filled the Duchess's heart with fear The King was ill at Metz very ill He was stricken on August 8th and forthwith

¹ Fragment from *Les Mémoires de Madame de Brancas*

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the stern catholic principles which had been instilled by the late Cardinal filled his soul with terror. If he were going to die, Louis desired to make his peace with God. He wanted to be with his Queen, to ask her pardon for his desertion, to renounce his guilty love Marie Leczinska, called in haste, sped to her husband's side, full of concern for the salvation of his soul, while the Duchess de Châteauroux and the Duchesse de Lauraguais received official orders to depart immediately. The Duc de Richelieu sought to protect the two women, but an infuriated crowd tried to stone them. Their coach was received with a storm of stones, and it was with the greatest of difficulty that the woman who had but lately been so triumphantly acclaimed now escaped from a horrible death.

She who had thought that her greatness was built upon solid foundations now shook with rage and malice far from the Court. Sometimes she wondered whether it had not all been a terrible nightmare and she dreamed of vengeance, reprisals. But the King recovered and with his fear of death he lost his terror of hell. The Queen had been devoted but unloving, so Louis turned his thoughts to the Duchess. Her beauty called him. He was intoxicated by the memory of past delights. He longed to return to his fair lady, to the happy life which had bewitched him. On the night of November 14th, he had an interview with her. The moment when he left her was the most sorrowful of all his life. After the 25th of the month, Maurepas himself was obliged to recall the Duchess to Versailles. How she triumphed and rejoiced at her reinstatement, what vengeance she planned for her enemies!

But while the first impressions of her arrival had not

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yet passed away she was seized with a sharp, violent pain which was utterly inexplicable. It tortured her and people feared for her life. On November 28th she was slightly better but at the close of December 1st terrible convulsive pains shook her frame and she was prostrated. She became wildly delirious and nothing could quiet her. On December 8th she died after atrocious suffering convinced that she had been poisoned. On December 13th at six o'clock in the morning without ceremony she was buried at Paris in the church of St. Sulpice.

Thus she disappeared at the age of twenty-seven—a woman beautiful and ambitious, gifted and full of hopes the only being who ever succeeded in giving Louis XV the appearance of a great king for at least one day.

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MADAME GEOFFRIN is celebrated through her salon, and it is chiefly in and in relation to her salon that we shall study her.

Marie Thérèse Rodet, daughter of L. Rodet, a *valet-de-chambre* to the Dauphine Marie Josèphe de Saxe, and of Madame Rodet, *née* Chemineau, whose father was a banker in the quartier St Honoré in Paris, was born in that city on June 2nd, 1699. She was very early orphaned, and was brought up by her maternal grandmother, Madame Chemineau. This woman, who was gifted with much commonsense and real intelligence, preferred her grand-daughter to learn to think, to discriminate, and to form opinions for herself rather than to imbibe a vast amount of book knowledge. So Marie Thérèse learnt very little from books and a great deal from her own observation.

On July 19th, 1713, she married, at the age of fourteen, Pierre-François Geoffrin, a rich tradesman of forty-five and a widower of less than a year, who for several months had observed the little girl at the Church of Saint Roch. He was struck by her thoughtful, sensible face, beneath its smooth cap of spotless white. The disparity between their ages does not seem to have troubled Madame Geoffrin in the least. She was a very wise, very obedient and very economical young wife, whom for many years Monsieur Geoffrin could not praise enough for her domestic nature and modest tastes.

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despite the rapid growth of their fortune, due to Monsieur Geoffrin's speculations in the manufacture of Saint-Gobain glass. Madame Geoffrin presented her husband with two children, a girl and a boy, who unfortunately died, to the great grief of the household.

If, during the first years of her marriage, Madame Geoffrin had no desire to go into society, it was not because she lacked the qualities necessary to shine there. We have a portrait of her at this period by Nattier, who depicts her as superbly handsome, stately, with a majestic carriage, a dazzling complexion, magnificent hair and sparkling, almost piercing eyes. Her whole appearance is that of a woman who could not pass unnoticed. But she ever remained a complete stranger to coquetry in all its forms. She never resorted to art to enhance her beauty. She was probably the only rich woman of her day who never rouged and whose conduct was always and in every respect, irreproachable. Grimm said of her: "Women always dress behind the times. Madame Geoffrin alone dresses ahead of them." The simplicity and severity of her dress were indeed striking at all periods of her life. She certainly had not reached middle-age when she was employing the boot maker about whom she wrote in her notebook: "To be kept makes very comfortable and serviceable shoes."

Madame Geoffrin had passed her fortieth year before she manifested an ambition to play a rôle in Parisian society and through it in the world at large. The moment was particularly well chosen. The Encyclopædists and their friends the philosophers were already formed into a society which had as yet no fixed centre. They met at one or two salons, at Madame de Tencin's

and at that of the wife of the Farmer General de la Popelinière, but they were not all invited to these houses, and, moreover, these salons were only partially suited to their discussions Madame de Tencin's life had been so mixed up with politics and intrigues that even now, when an old woman, philosophy and social economy scarcely satisfied her active mind. As to pretty Madame de la Popelinière, who had left the stage to marry a fortune, she was far more interested in the Duc de Richelieu's declarations of love than in philosophical discussions Thus the salon of the Encyclopædists and philosophers was not yet in existence

Why should not Madame Geoffrin create this salon ? The immense fortune which her husband had by now amassed made it possible, and her tastes drew her in this direction Her good sense told her that a salon, where all these thinkers on topical questions met, would at once attract general attention and gain instant fame Up till now the ambitious pride of the successful bourgeoisie had been clothed in humility because she preferred to be nothing if not first, but now she suddenly saw a unique opportunity to push herself to the front Will was Madame Geoffrin's dominant quality According to the Marquis de Ségur it gave her her individuality while she herself said, " Will transcends all other virtues, without it they would be wrecked " It was this will which made the ambitious dream of the manufacturer's wife and the daughter of the Dauphine's *valet-de-chambre* a possibility

By force of will, tact, patience, discretion, judgment, and the power to command, Madame Geoffrin was to become the most important woman in Paris and the

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French oracle to the foreigner She began by obtaining an introduction to Madame de Tencin and Madame de la Popelinière At the former's house she merely made herself agreeable, but at the latter's she sought to form friendships Soon, to Madame de la Popelinière's great displeasure Madame Geoffrin issued invitations to the habitués of the *fermière générale*'s salon with whom she had established friendly relations The invitations were eagerly accepted and the guests were delighted with their reception.

The dream took shape Monsieur Geoffrin was dumbfounded Who would have thought that the submissive simple wife to whom he had been married for twenty-five years would suddenly be seized with the mad and ruinous idea of running a '*bureau d'esprit*'? The husband expostulated, lost his temper the house was like a little hell during the first few months of Madame Geoffrin's receptions But finally Monsieur Geoffrin vanquished by his wife's indomitable will protested only by his silence and the zeal with which he arranged the best menus with the greatest economy Indeed as long as he lived he was sole comptroller of his household not allowing anyone else to draw up the menus to order provisions to fix the expenditure or to carve at table

Madame Geoffrin began her life as a *salonnière* with a social revolution Until she appeared dinner invitations had only been issued for the evening But Madame Geoffrin's first invitations were for dinner at an afternoon hour In this way she contrived long hours of talk for herself and her friends without shortening the hours of sleep It was the first display of that admirable balance by which all her actions were



MARIE-THERÈSE RODET

Wife of Pierre François Geoffrin Born June 1699 died October 1777

Print after Nattier's portrait of Madame Geoffrin

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controlled. The guests were delighted with the innovation, and as soon as Madame de Tencin died, at the beginning of 1749, the migration to Madame Geoffrin was accomplished. Her salon became the stronghold of liberal thought, the ideal meeting-place of all who hated the Jesuits and hungered after emancipation. It was from her house that were hurled the darts directed against ministers and the satires on the clergy, and whence emanated all the stinging witticisms which Europe repeated after France.

The place where all these combative guests and deep thinkers met was situated in the Rue Saint Honoré, on the spot occupied to-day by No 372, which is partly constructed from the remains of Madame Geoffrin's house. Its luxury was sober but solid and very comfortable. There was nothing ostentatious or trashy in the decorations, but there were many very valuable works of art. In the large salon were some superb Beauvais tapestries and beautiful canvasses by the hands of masters, which multiplied in exact ratio to Madame Geoffrin's artistic friendships. All the furniture was antique, very artistic, and, above all, very comfortable. In this milieu, which was characterized by a simple elegance and a perfect, though austere taste, the dress of the lady of the house appeared even plainer than her surroundings. She wore only dark colours and her clothes were severe in cut. The only light points about her dress were collars and cuffs of the whitest and finest linen, but always quite plain. Very early she partly concealed her silvery-white hair under a black silk cap, tied beneath her chin.

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Chardin who painted her portrait in 1758 depicts her in this costume which she had already affected for several years Chardin's portrait is very different from that of Nattier. The features are heavier and the lips thinner compressed perhaps from having let fly those pointed witticisms those terse epigrams which at once charmed and startled the habitués of her salon. The eyes are unchanged but an ironical expression has spread over the whole face. Her figure, stately and erect, is handsome and graceful her whole appearance is dignified and thoughtful.

Madame Geoffrin gives a strong impression of the power which she exercised over all her friends, and the influence which she had on her contemporaries. To them she represented the law of good taste.

Soon Madame Geoffrin's friends divided into two large and distinct groups the artists, and the writers and thinkers. Every Monday she received the artists at her table. Wednesday was the day for the thinkers and writers—this was the big day. The fare served at her table was delicious but unpretentious like her furniture and her dress. It was excellent plain cooking everything being French in character and home grown. The conversation at these dinners was even more French than the cooking. Madame Geoffrin led it with incomparable tact judgment and authority.

'That will do now' she was wont to say when she wanted to stop a conversation which she thought was going too far. This phrase never failed of its effect. Madame Geoffrin was born to rule.

One could not associate with her without becoming aware of this. Horace Walpole whom she received at her salon with the rest of the foreign notabilities

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passing through Paris, was so struck with her power of organization and her gift for ruling that he wrote to Lady Hervey. "If it were worth her while I assure your ladyship she might govern me like a child"¹

Madame Geoffrin did not veil her remarks when she had occasion to show disapproval. "Monsieur le Comte", she said, in her clear curt tones to the Comte de Coigny, who, at a dinner to which she had invited him, told a long stupid story, and who used a pocket knife to cut up the fowl which had been placed before him in order to keep him quiet, "Monsieur le Comte, if you want to get on in this place large knives and short stories are essential" Again, it was at Madame Geoffrin's house, and beneath her glance of approval, that someone declared that Boucher who painted Venus and the Virgin from theatrical goddesses "had never seen the Graces in good society"

All the great artists of the day were Madame Geoffrin's friends and under obligations to her the two Vanloos, Boucher, Vernet, Lagrenée, Soufflot, de la Tour, the pastellist, and how many more besides! As soon as fresh talent was revealed it had its place at the Monday dinners Thus Pigalle was invited to Madame Geoffrin's directly the Marshal of Saxony's mausoleum had made him famous She gave orders to all and did them many a good turn On Carl Vanloo's death his widow found herself in financial difficulties. When she heard this, Madame Geoffrin immediately put up to auction the numerous and superb pictures by Vanloo in her possession for the benefit of his widow The sale realized a very large sum, which

¹ Horace Walpole's Letters Vol. IV, p 420 (Bohn's English Gentleman's Library)

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she hastened to offer to the widow, afterwards buying back at the higher price bid for them the masterpieces which she had just sold

Madame Geoffrin treated the thinkers and philosophers with the same kindness and liberality as the artists. The thinkers of this epoch d'Alembert, Marivaux Morellet Fontenelle Chastellux Mairan Helvétius, Raynal Saint-Lambert Grimm d Holbach Marmontel not only thronged around her, but often, entirely thanks to her triumphed over serious difficulties. She sheltered several under her roof and acted the part of a mother to them no doubt she scolded at times but she was always devoted

Marmontel more than anyone else had the opportunity of testing her affection and experiencing her temper. He was residing at her house when he wrote and produced his *Bélisaire*. Madame Geoffrin was the first to encourage him to write this work of challenge and satire but in acting thus she had counted on the complete success of the work. She had thought that under her *égis* the play would not be officially attacked. Not only did the law forbid the performance of *Bélisaire* but Marmontel himself was tried sentenced to three months' imprisonment and condemned to watch his play burnt by the hand of the public executioner. Before the decree was carried out it was ordered to be affixed for several days to the door of the guilty author's domicile. As Marmontel's domicile was none other than that of Madame Geoffrin it was on the door of this woman who could not brook the slightest criticism and who was ultra-sensitive that the terms of the sentence were posted. Madame Geoffrin was quite ill from it. She even fell into a

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fever, and she harboured a deep and violent resentment against Marmontel, to whom she owed this incredible humiliation. So when Marmontel came out of prison and returned to the Hôtel in the Rue de Saint-Honoré, he was greeted by an unresponsive, disgruntled woman, who affected a complete indifference to the sufferings of her protégé. Marmontel made no effort to appease her, but treated her to an even more icy coldness than her own, and after an interview of a few short moments, hurried off to his room and barricaded the door. From the noise which he made in shutting himself in, Madame Geoffrin understood that her protégé's attitude was going to be neither submissive nor repentant. The pride of the successful bourgeoisie, however, forbade her to be sorry for the unkind reception which she had given him. But during the course of the evening, Madame Geoffrin reflected that the author had had no dinner, that prison diet had probably weakened him, that he must be unhappy, and over and above, that *he was not yet absolutely vanquished*. So she went up to his room, called him and offered him everything which her motherly heart suggested might do him good. Marmontel remained obdurate. He met Madame Geoffrin's repeated appeals with a persistent silence until past midnight, at which late hour she abandoned her task. But very early next morning she presented herself afresh at Marmontel's door, and this time her voice was tender and supplicating. The author was moved by her compassion, and opening his door at last, allowed Madame Geoffrin to come into his room and apologize for her unkindness. The scene was short, but touching and sincere. Madame Geoffrin resumed her rôle of powerful and discerning

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benefactress and in less than a week neither wished to recall their late difference

In Madame Geoffrin, Voltaire found his most powerful ally in placing the great Corneille's grand daughter above want Yet Madame Geoffrin had many reasons for viewing the little girl's family with strong disfavour Corneille the mechanic, had indeed caused her all sorts of trouble by contesting the will in which his great-great uncle, Fontenelle had left Madame Geoffrin his life-long friend, residuary legatee But she did not allow these law-suits to prevent her from sending Voltaire the most generous gift of any which little Marie Corneille received

Madame Geoffrin had, however, her own idea of friendship Her very counters were engraved with the words — Never let grass grow in the path of friendship but when her friends were in a desperate situation she ceased to know them Before the hopeless hour had struck, she left no stone unturned to save them from shipwreck Her energies, her purse her power everything was brought into play But if notwithstanding this expenditure of trouble and money, she could not avert the ruin, she would have nothing more to do with them after their fall

I should prefer you to stop writing to me', she said in her last letter to one of these human wrecks The Comte Caylus has thanked me on your behalf, and that is sufficient I beg you in future to forget that you have ever known me I shall forget it too

Such an attitude may perhaps excuse ingratitude If Madame Geoffrin acted in this way it was probably because she wished to preserve her peace She had an extreme dread of anything which might disturb

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the harmony of her days. She carried this dread so far that in the case of things, as well as people, she refused to see the side which would destroy her illusions. "To perceive the beauty of a thing is a pleasure, but we rob ourselves of this sweet experience when we look for its faults", she wrote. Therefore she declined to see or to know anything which was definitely unpleasant, in order to reduce pain in her life to a minimum

After Monsieur Geoffrin's death on the 20th December, 1749, Madame Geoffrin as she advanced in years enjoyed more and more the fruits of her long efforts. She inspired a very real affection. Distinguished foreigners passing through Paris sought the honour of an introduction. Not to be received by Madame Geoffrin was a far more serious affair than not going to Court. Foreign notables were not only proud of having been received by Madame Geoffrin, but made every effort to continue the acquaintance after they had returned to their own country. Kaunitz, the Empress Maria-Theresa's minister, wrote to Madame Geoffrin that he had her portrait in his bedroom. The Russian Ambassador begged permission to put her in touch with the mother of the Russian Heir-Apparant.

During the autumn of 1758, the Princesse d'Anhalt-Zerbst, mother of the future Catherine the Great, became Madame Geoffrin's intimate friend. This Princess spoke with such admiration of Madame Geoffrin's power in Paris, in France and abroad, that Catherine, who had become Empress by questionable methods, sought eagerly to enter into a friendly and regular correspondence with Madame Geoffrin with a view to getting this power on her side.

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But of all Madame Geoffrin's illustrious friendships none touched her heart so deeply, or exerted so great an influence on her life as that which bound her to the Comte Poniatowski, and through him, to his fourth son, the witty, elegant, handsome, cultured Stanislas Poniatowski. The Comte Poniatowski was so charmed with Madame Geoffrin's conversation and touched by the multifarious services which she rendered him in Paris that he christened her his "spiritual wife." He promised to send her in this capacity all his boys in order that she might advise and guide them.

So it happened that when Stanislas Auguste Poniatowski arrived in Paris at the beginning of 1753 he immediately called on Madame Geoffrin. Papa's "spiritual wife" fell in love at once with this winning youth whose voluptuous and disturbing charms were to excite the emotions of many a woman. No doubt she thoroughly realized that this handsome boy had nothing of her character nor tastes. But for once her imagination ordinarily so sane clashed with her reason. The well balanced Madame Geoffrin gave herself up to the enjoyment of a most complete and romantic maternal love for the brilliant alluring worldly pleasure-lover, for such was Stanislas Auguste Poniatowski. She wished to make him a perfect Parisian and a peerless gentleman. The young man listened to all the counsels of his adopted mother with a deference and amiability which were part of his charm but in society he was ruled by his insatiable instinct for pleasure. He was amused and captivated by anything provided it was elegant and in good taste. Stanislas Auguste's funds were soon insufficient for this

life of luxury and pleasure, and Madame Geoffrin generously and delicately supplemented them.

But one day Poniatowski went so far that he too experienced Madame Geoffrin's severity. Over an exciting game of cards, the young man lost, not only all he had and all that his father could send him, but also signed an I.O.U. for an enormous sum, far in excess of his funds. The hours which immediately followed this folly were still untroubled for young Poniatowski. The intoxication of the cards, the hope of winning back the stake, the dazzling lights, and the atmosphere of the card-room prevented him from thinking. But next day when he woke in his own room, in broad daylight and in full possession of his senses, he was seized with horror at the thought that he had only twenty-four hours in which to pay the enormous debts which he had incurred. What was to be done? It was utterly useless to apply to his father. The only person who could save him was his adopted mother. He made up his mind to confess to her, but how he dreaded it! Madame Geoffrin demanded the whole story, without the omission of a single detail. She listened in silence, then, when all was told, she informed her adopted son that she would be obliged to confine him to the house while she took the deplorable affair in hand. Poniatowski, only too thankful to see a way out of his horrible situation, consented to everything, and his twenty-four hours incarceration in the Rue Saint-Honoré seemed to him Paradise after all that he had suffered. This confinement was, moreover, most salutary, for never during the months which followed did he repeat the follies of that awful night.

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When this adopted son ascended the throne of Poland on the 9th September 1764 Madame Geofrin was overjoyed 'When I think that my dear son whom I knew in his early youth, and scolded well is now King and loves me just as much as ever, my brain reels and my heart burns My Trinity! I adore and embrace you My son! My King! What other commoner can say this? I alone ! '

Soon Madame Geoffrin yielded to the wishes of her son King who invited her to come and reign at Warsaw He said that without her he faltered in his government that she alone could give him those counsels which make great kings What a vision for this bourgeois! Mother and counsellor of a king!

So dazzling was the prospect that even her affection for Paris from which she had never gone farther than ten miles nor spent a single night away, was not sufficiently strong to make her resist this plan to go to Poland She wanted to see this son on the throne, to organize his life to set his kingdom in order! So she made up her mind to go and took a whole year to prepare for the journey Her coach her trunks her dresses, her wardrobe, everything was expressly made for the occasion and under her supervision

When finally Madame Geofrin left Paris it was a European event Sovereigns illustrious men high dignitaries came to greet her Never was queen making a royal progress treated with greater deference or honour Her heart overflowed with joy and pride and she looked forward to an even greater reception at Warsaw At last the Polish capital was reached

¹ Letter from Madame Geofrin to King Stanislas of Poland
September 1764

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Stanislas came in person to receive his dear brother and Madame Geoffrin, tasting the outward marks of attention from the mighty, but understood the intoxication of popular credulity.

But disappointments awaited her at the Polish Palace. Life did not move in the way she had pictured. Stanislas Poniatowski (or Stanislas II) was surrounded by too many young and lovely women to please Madame Geoffrin. The very next day she commented on the fact to her adopted son. But to her painful surprise, she realized that the King no longer remembered that he had asked his adopted mother to counsel and advise him. Poniatowski certainly wished her to occupy a position of honour and glory at Court, but she was to be an idol without power and to keep to the rôle which he had assigned to her. Madame Geoffrin experienced the cruellest disappointment of her life when she discovered such to be the idea of that son whom she had come to instruct in the art of government. So she had sacrificed her tastes, her habits, her peace, her triumphs in the Rue Saint-Honoré only to discover that her well-beloved son was not what she had expected. She was a lesser personage in Warsaw than she was in Paris.

When she was thoroughly convinced that the situation could not be modified, she was even more eager to return to France than she had been to come to Warsaw. Little by little her maternal love for Poniatowski waned and languished, and when she left Poland the breach between her and the man whom she had loved with such pride and ardour, was almost complete.

On her return from this triumphal joy, Madame Geoffrin's importance and power still

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More than ever her salon became the loadstone of France and Europe and the objective of all the socially ambitious. If by reason of her plebian origin she was only received once at Court although her daughter widow of the Marquis de la Ferté-Imbault, was entrusted with the education of Madame Elizabeth Louis XVI's sister, Marie-Antoinette did for her what she never did for anyone else. She took advantage of a private view of an exhibition of paintings which had been arranged for the Royal Family, to ask Madame Geoffrin to meet her. Here the young Queen could do what was not possible at Court to wit, invite the old friend of her mother the Empress Maria Theresa, even though she had declined to join the ranks of the nobility when the opportunity had been given to her. As soon as Madame Geoffrin entered the picture gallery Marie Antoinette took her young sister in law by the hand and presented her to Madame Geoffrin! Never until that day had a young Princess of the blood been presented to a bourgeoise!

This tremendous triumph which set all Paris talking be it to praise or blame the Queen's action was one of the last which Madame Geoffrin enjoyed. She began to lose her vitality and age reminded her that even the fullest life comes to an end. One day her limbs lost their power and she was threatened with paralysis. It was then that her daughter the Marquise de la Ferté-Imbault an ardent Catholic who had always viewed with sorrow her mother's pleasure in the society of the Encyclopædists and thinkers sought to restore Madame Geoffrin to the faith of her childhood. In order that she should die a Christian death fortified by the rites of the church she sought every means to

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cut her mother off from those whom she termed free thinkers and atheists D'Alembert tried to circumvent this manœuvre, but in vain. Madame Geoffrin an invalid, resigned herself to her daughter's will, but still retaining her wit and good sense she remarked " My daughter is like Godfrey de Bouillon, she wants to defend my tomb against the infidels " Although ill, Madame Geoffrin received the Emperor Joseph II in July, 1777 The monarch sat by her bedside for quite two hours

Three months later on the 6th October, 1777, Madame Geoffrin breathed her last after being reconciled to the church, as her daughter had wished, after writing an exceedingly affectionate letter to her adopted son and completing the most intelligent, sensible will that has ever been drawn up.

Strange to say, her death passed almost unnoticed. Cut off from her circle for close upon a year, it was rather when she first ceased to come among them that her friends had mourned her. But now it seemed as though she had been dead for a long time Only three of her old friends followed the coffin—D'Alembert, Thimon and Morellet. The others did not learn until too late that this woman, who had occupied such a prominent position in Paris and Europe, died in the bosom of Saint Roch, without pomp or circumstance, in a carriage in whose departure no one is interested.

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THE appearance of this artist's name in a gallery of princesses ladies and *salomèrèses* of the eighteenth century may at first sight create astonishment Adrienne Lecouvreur, of humble birth can make not only no claim to the title of princess but not even to that of "lady" Neither has she any more right to the name of *salomèrèse* for her house was not a society *rendezvous* where people of both sexes came to discuss philosophy, politics and literature Nevertheless she has a double right to her place here on the one hand because of the influence which by her talent she had upon the theatre and through it upon the literature of the eighteenth century and on the other because her tragic love affair with the greatest general of his time made her the envied the heroine or the victim of the fashionable *salons* and of the *grandes dames* her rivals

Monval keeper of the archives at the *Comédie Française* one of Adrienne Lecouvreur's most reliable and best informed biographers has justly said of her

'In two and a half centuries from the days of the *Cid* down to our own no tragic actress was nobler more touching, or more worthy of admiration and respect than Adrienne Lecouvreur She brought to the theatre the virtues of the superior woman a mind just lofty serious tender and rational



ADRIENNE LECOUVREUR

Born 1692, died 1730 The greatest French tragedienne of the XVIIIth Century

Print by P. Drevet after Coppel's portrait

ADRIENNE LECOUVREUR

Adrienne Lecouvreur was born in 1692 in the little town of Damery in Champagne. Her father was a hatter, and her mother, Marie Bouly, devoted her time to looking after her family and household. Nothing unusual marked Adrienne's early youth. There are those who claim that when less than ten years old she astounded the villagers of Damery by her recitations of verse. But of this there is no proof or real evidence. It is more likely that her talent lay dormant until the time when her father set up as a hatter in Paris, that is to say, until the girl was nearly twelve years of age. Her father opened his shop in the *quartier* St. Germain, not far from the theatre where the *Comédie Française* were then playing. Their proximity had a profound influence on little Adrienne, her dramatic instinct developed, showed itself more clearly, and became stronger by contact with the talent of the actors of this company, the best, perhaps, of the period. The young girl often went to the play, although after their arrival in Paris, her father sent her to a convent and entrusted her education to the nuns. But there were holidays, which Adrienne spent in going to hear the *Comédie Française*, pretexts which she was able to invent and opportunities which she never failed to seize.

Thus, when young Mademoiselle Lecouvreur left the pension at the age of fourteen, her first effort was expended in forming into a company of amateurs those of her friends of both sexes who shared her love of the theatre, in order to organize Society performances. It may appear strange that a person of such tender years should take the lead in such an enterprise, and that, with no experience, without advice, with exceedingly small resources, she should

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have succeeded in training actors and founding a theatre of real value

Without true dramatic genius Adrienne would assuredly not have attained such a result. Even with this genius perhaps she would not have achieved it if her case had been unique. But at the beginning of the eighteenth century there were in Paris and in many of the big provincial towns, numerous theatres which owed their existence to private initiative directed and inspired by quite young people, almost always men it is true.

Notwithstanding this restriction it was these precedents which gave this schoolgirl of yesterday the courage and assurance to make herself head of the company. It was her talent which enabled her to triumph over difficulties and to give to her associates a training which she herself had never received. The difficulties of this sort of theatre were all the greater since only the officially recognized companies were authorized to give performances. The theatre in France at that time was a monopoly and the actors of these licensed societies were terribly jealous of their privileges which they knew how to make thoroughly respected. In spite of everything Adrienne was able to hold her own. She obtained for her theatre the patronage of a literary *grande dame* the Présidente du Gay. This lady was so captivated by the young girl's talent and the ability of her company that she invited them to give a public performance in her *hôtel*. The entertainment was to begin with a tragedy to be followed by a comedy *Le demi* (In Mourning) which had nothing of the gloom that its title would appear to suggest.

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The Présidente's offer was naturally accepted with enthusiasm by the little theatre. The date of the evening chosen was awaited with impatience, and feverish activity so that everything should be arranged to the best advantage. At last the longed-for day arrived and the opening of the entertainment passed all expectations. The audience, large and select, acclaimed in Adrienne a new star. Madame du Gay felt proud of having discovered a talent of the first order, which but for her would have remained unrecognized. At the end of the last act of the tragedy the whole company received a veritable ovation. All the actors were stimulated by their success to play the comedy which was to follow, but before they had time to begin several police officers, sent by the King's players, who were madly jealous of the triumph of the new *artiste* and her friends, came to stop the performance in the name of the law. It was in vain that Madame du Gay and her friends tried to intervene in favour of their *protégés*, to point out that this performance given in a private house, could not be compared with a play acted in a public place, their insistence only ended in exasperating the police and causing them to threaten to conduct the whole company to the Châtelet.

Thus Adrienne's first triumph terminated in rout. It was fortunate that the enthusiastic Madame du Gay was able to engineer a swift revenge for the *artiste*. She interested the Prior of Vendôme, all-powerful on his free domain and *hôtel* of the Temple. At his house the police had no more power than the players to prevent Adrienne from acting. Thanks to the Prior of Vendôme's patronage, the *débutante* knew the sustaining

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applause, renewed night by night and a public whose enlightened and refined taste was to her a veritable education

But naturally it was Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's ambition to belong to a licensed company. The intervention of one of her aunts was to open the way for her. This aunt was merely a laundress and she justified once again that reputation for cunning and finesse which the French laundress has always borne

Among her customers the said laundress numbered one of the most famous actors of the day—Monsieur Legrand. Now in order to gain for her niece Monsieur Legrand's patronage and advice the laundress bestowed the most touching attentions on his linen. No man in Paris had neck bands so white, cuffs so well goffered or such moderate washing bills as had Monsieur Legrand. The actor was moved by such treatment and asked his laundress in what way he could show his gratitude.

This was the moment for which the aunt had waited. She told Legrand of Adrienne's dream of her difficulties and of her desire to become a great *artiste*. Legrand went to the Temple to hear the young tragedienne. At the end of her first declamation he was as enthusiastic over, as he was amazed at the young girl's talent, and without waiting for the morrow he offered in the first interval to teach her the 'trade' and to place his connection and influence in relation to the stage at her service. It was thanks to this influence and to Legrand's lessons that in 1708 she obtained her first theatrical engagement at Strasbourg.

At that time Adrienne was only sixteen but her

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talent and mind were already those of a mature woman. Her subtle gift of observation led her to follow Molière's example, and she, too, went to the provinces to gain finish. In Paris she would have had no opportunity of studying what was true to nature. Indeed, so great is the power of fashion in the capital, which has for so long given its tone to the world, that he who lives there is never absolutely himself but a person formed by the dictates of custom and good taste. In the provinces, on the contrary, especially at this epoch, when the means of communication were still few and slow, everyone reveals his own individuality, characteristics and even peculiarities. Love of comfort, vanity, ignorance of what is going on in Paris, and country life, explain the difference between the Parisian and the denizen of the provinces. Then the young *artiste* was confronted at Strasbourg by a vast collection of picturesque and natural models which were to furnish her with the true and real elements of her numerous living creations. For an actress with Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's gifts the opportunity was invaluable.

In 1708, Adrienne was physically, as well as mentally, fully developed. She was not at all pretty, if beauty consists of having regular features, but she was extremely pretty if one finds beauty pre-eminently in expression and charm. She was rather short, but everything about her was graceful and in harmony. Her dark eyes were bright and full of fire, her heart-shaped mouth, with its full, vividly red lips, was truly beautiful. She had an aquiline nose, soft silky auburn hair, a noble and confident carriage, and a very mobile face. To see and hear her was to love her.

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Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's art bore the stamp of her personality. Like her it was sympathetic and from this date it sought to express itself simply and naturally. Indeed hardly had Adrienne made her *début* at Strasbourg than she took an unconquerable dislike to the prevailing manner of declaiming lines. Nothing could be less natural than this manner. One might almost say that the lines were sung rather than spoken. It was a sort of monotonous chant with a pause on the caesura and at the end of the line the next line beginning with the same uniform sing-song cadence something like that soothing music of Sarah Bernhardt's golden voice which was one day to gain the admiration of the whole world. But the artificial chant employed by second rate or even common actors had something so spurious so unnatural about it that the impulsive genius of Adrienne Lecouvreur rose at once in revolt.

Adrienne wished to speak, walk and behave on the stage as she did in real life. She discarded the habit of chanting lines and instead spoke them with expression, taste, naturalness and artistic simplicity. It was in simplicity that she sought her most moving effects. She spoke on the stage as she did outside but with much care, expression and exactitude. At the same time she never risked a gesture which she considered out of place or affected in a drawing-room. While one of her most famous contemporaries Mademoiselle Duclos took five minutes to sit down or to blow her nose on the stage, Adrienne endeavoured to make each of her movements harmonious and dignified and above all to give the impression of truth and sincerity.

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This new way of speaking lines and of transforming the preconceived idea of the theatre constituted a regular artistic revolution. It may be said that the rational, logical, and natural school of acting, which has had so profound an influence on the education of the people of France, is the outcome of the good taste and good sense, of the labour and courage of this actress of genius. Adrienne created a new style which was all the more pleasing because it was nearer to the truth and easier to understand.

Unfortunately, when she reached this far-off epoch, the tragedienne sought in love a rest from her labours and a support which her gentle heart could not do without.

She fell in love, first of all, with a young baron who died a short time after meeting her. Soon afterwards she wanted to marry the actor Clavel, brother of the manageress of the theatre at Strasbourg where Adrienne had already carried out such important reforms. But Clavel turned a deaf ear to her proposals of marriage. He preferred short-lived *liaisons* to a definite union, which creates obligations and duties. Then, annoyed and humiliated, Adrienne, who had twice been disappointed in love, listened to the ardent declarations of Philippe Le Roy. This man, as unscrupulous as he was incapable of deep feelings, hastened to desert her as soon as he had made her the mother of a daughter—Elizabeth Adrienne, who was born in 1710. The young actress was only eighteen years of age. More than ever morally disillusioned, and thirsting for affection as she had never done before, she allowed a certain Kinghin, who promised her marriage, to make love to her. But he basely deserted her in favour

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of a rich woman in his native town after Adrienne had given birth in 1716 to a second daughter, Françoise Catharine Ursule.

In face of her many repulses and fresh attempts to try to find happiness in love, one of Adrienne's biographers has the hard-heartedness to say

"Adrienne spent her life in working and loving. She went from Legrand to the Chevalier de Rohan from Rohan to Voltaire from Voltaire to Lord Petersborough from Lord Petersborough to the Marshal of Saxony." The same biographer has even had the cruelty to state that Lord Petersborough going to Adrienne as to a purveyor of love and wit used to say on entering

'Now Madame, show me plenty of love and plenty of wit and I'll pay well for both'

This manner of depicting Adrienne is as cruel as it is unjust. If this passionate and loving woman allowed her affections to wander it was because her lovers were faithless. Every rupture caused her acute pain. Each time that her intensely tender nature disposed her to listen to a new wooer she always believed him to be the one for whom her heart had been waiting and who would remain her life mate. Besides neither Voltaire nor Legrand were anything more to Adrienne than devoted friends. Finally one must always remember that her love affairs never interfered with her work.

Adrienne Lecouvreur returned to Paris in 1717 crowned with fame after her provincial successes and the important reforms which she had succeeded in imposing on theatrical art. *The Comédie Française* now claimed her as its own and from the date of her

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entry she reigned there as queen. Complete mistress of this simple and natural art, impressive by reason of its freedom from artificiality, which she had created, and which she perfected with each day, she filled the most difficult *rôles* of the repertory and each one of her creations was a triumph. As Pauline in the tragedy of *Polyeucte* she gave an admirable representation of strong gentleness, of striking self-sacrifice of simple nobility. As Monime in *Mithridate* she was extremely touching in her resignation and love. When she played Bérénice the whole house shook with sobs.

To take a number of entirely different parts, Adrienne Lecouvreur was superbly terrible in the frenzies of Jocasta, Athalie, Roxane, Hermione and in the passionate transports of the burning and twice guilty love of Phædra. With equal ease this clever tragedienne could depict gentleness, frenzy, passion and resignation. She was always so natural and so much herself, that each one of her creations seemed a page out of her own life. She brought to the stage the same sincerity which characterized her private life. Despite the theory of a great actor of our day, Constant Coquelin, called Coquelin *ainé*, we have in Adrienne Lecouvreur a striking proof of how an actor or an actress can live completely in their *rôle* and yet remain supreme masters of their art. Adrienne was so successful in this, that for thirteen years she was acknowledged as the wonderful and marvellous queen of the *Comédie Française*.

But rivals, both male and female, did not stop. She had continually to fight them and to circumscribe their intrigues, those of Mademoiselle Duclos, had been the public's favour.  Adrienne

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appearance in Paris and of Mademoiselle Gaussin in particular The triumphant Adrienne with no other help than the advice of her devoted friend the actor Baron succeeded in frustrating the plots of all her enemies without harming any one of them But these battles like her former disappointments in love, caused her very real and profound suffering Tender and true Adrienne Lecouvreur was destined to suffer much even in the scene of her triumphs because of her passionate feelings and delicate sensibility Yet it was not the stage which was to cause her the greatest pain and suffering of her life but one for whom she made immense sacrifices and for whom her love was boundless

A few years after her *début* at the *Comédie Française*, Adrienne Lecouvreur had been very much noticed and admired by a most distinguished *seigneur* the cynosure of all eyes in Europe Maurice of Saxony for her amorous wooer was none other than the natural son of Augustus II, King of Poland and the Countess of Koenigsmark possessed the high courage and radiant beauty with which popular imagination in those days chose to endow the sons of kings Very princely were his heart and wits and his brilliant qualities were enhanced by a gallant manner as whimsical as it was fantastic Like his father he boasted that he could never resist a pair of beautiful eyes After his marriage to the Princess de Loben who loved him with a burning but restless passion Maurice left no stone unturned to obtain a divorce because he was far more annoyed by his wife's jealousy than he would have been had she hated him But never were scenes of jealousy better justified than those of the



MAURICE OF SAXONY

Born 1696, died 1750

*Print by J G Will after the portrait painted by Hyacinthe Rigaud
chevalier de l'ordre de St Michel*

ADRIENNE LECOUVREUR

Princesse de Loben with Maurice of Saxony. To love, to fight, and to charm, such was our young hero's life during his marriage, as it was both before and after

Now, whenever Maurice of Saxony had heard Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, he was so moved by her charms and superiority that he seemed to become a different man. From the first time that he saw her on the stage he fell head over heels in love with her. He waited, however, before declaring his passion to be quite sure that his imagination was not leading him astray. But at each new performance that he heard Adrienne, the young captain's passion grew until it dominated his whole being. One evening, unable any longer to resist the flame of his devouring love, he begged with deep emotion the favour of being received in the actress's dressing room. This happiness was granted him, and then, almost before he caught sight of her, he swore on his honour and by his valour that if she would only listen to his love he would dedicate himself to her for life and that he was ready to sacrifice everything for her sake. For her, he promised to give up war, to renounce fame, worldly success, and valorous romantic adventures. He desired nothing henceforth but to love and be loved by her.

The tender-hearted woman, fascinated by the Prince's beauty, by his passion, which was as eloquent as it was ardent, his distinction and his manly grace, by all that was irresistible and compelling in his nature, believed that, at last, she had found the hero of her dreams. She believed that he it was whom her heart had longed for and sought while it was making so many mistakes, the chosen being for whom

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she had suffered all the pain and disappointment in the past in order that when he came she might be worthy of him. And for the first time in her life Adrienne was infinitely happy

The tragedienne loved Maurice of Saxony as he desired to be loved absolutely, exclusively madly Her genius became the handmaid to her love When Adrienne interpreted the fiery burning heroic passions of her *rôles*, it was of her lover that she thought and for him and through him she became more superb She grew with her passion

Maurice on his side became gentle and tender for her sake The lion was tamed to please his lady The universe for him seemed to begin and end where Adrienne lived his real sunshine was the smile of his mistress Paris beheld with amazement the spectacle of Maurice of Saxony in the part of a faithful and constant lover The two first lines of La Fontaine's fable of the pair of doves was applied to them

Two turtle-doves loved each other most tenderly ¹

The sceptical eighteenth century smiled benignly and sympathetically on the idyll of the general and the tragedienne Both of them, plunged in happiness, tasted its delights to the full

But there came a day when the lion awoke Maurice of Saxony considered that he owed it to his illustrious birth to become a king It seemed to him that to accept a humble position in the world and to remain inactive before he had conquered a throne would be an insult to his father A study of the map of Europe encouraged the hope of Courland's subjugation No

¹ Deux pigeons s'aimaient d'amour tendre

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sooner did he conceive this dazzling scheme than it became an obsession. Adrienne did not imagine that she would lose her lover, that Courland would become his new passion, and that war was about to dispute her claim on him. She shed tears, lamented the days that were past, and was startled by the rapid flight of time. But in the spirit of a true heroine she swore in no way to dissuade her valorous lover from an enterprise which might add to his fame. She went even further. After swearing to Maurice of Saxony that nothing could make her untrue to her vows of faithfulness, her devotion carried her to the point when, in order to provide funds for the expedition to Courland in 1726, she sold all her jewels and silver plate. Maurice was, at that time, as throughout the whole of his life, deeply in debt and absolutely unable to lay out any money on this expedition.

Spontaneous and generous as was this *beau geste* of Adrienne Lecouvreur, cruel pens have, nevertheless, criticized and accused the tragedienne of acting thus in order to hold by her purse-strings the lover who one day might be a king, and whom she hoped then to make her lawful husband. But the campaign in Courland was marked only by reverses. Maurice of Saxony was unmatched in valour and accomplished many notable deeds. But his achievements added to his prestige alone. When, in 1729, he returned to Paris, he had won nothing and had spent every penny of the considerable sums of money which Adrienne had sacrificed to his bid for victory. But the *grandes dames*, who knew how valiant and splendid he had been, were infatuated with him and vied with one another as to who should invite, *fête*, and pet him most. One

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of them in particular the Duchesse de Bouillon grand daughter of Poland's popular hero John Sobiesky who delivered Vienna from the Turks in 1683 was passionately enamoured of him and sought to compel his love Maurice of Saxony flattered by the attentions and raptures of these ladies, especially by the Duchesse de Bouillon's passion told himself that his *liaison* with Adrienne did not deprive him of the right to enjoy the love of the great ladies who admired him He still loved his mistress but the fiery passion of the years before 1726 had burnt out His love for Adrienne now was nothing more than an ordinary affection ready for any compromise This was why the gay captain ventured to invite the Duchess to his Folie , that is to say to the villa which according to the fashion followed by the *seigneurs* of the eighteenth century he had bought and furnished solely for his love vagaries The Duchesse de Bouillon hastened to accept the warrior's invitation and in the name of the ties which henceforth united her to Maurice she insisted on going with him to hear Mademoiselle Lecouvreur On the evening when the Duchesse de Bouillon and Maurice of Saxony repaired together to the theatre to hear the tragedienne Adrienne felt that the Duchess was her rival Stung by jealousy she was more wonderful than ever Five times the curtain was raised in response to the tremendous applause of the audience The Duchess seized the occasion of this ovation to inform her companion that she would like to add her special congratulations to the public applause in order that Mademoiselle Lecouvreur might know how greatly she admired her So she invited Adrienne to come to her box to receive her personal compliments

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In reality, Madame de Bouillon was anxious to see the actress at close quarters, for she wished to find out for herself how far Adrienne was a danger to her new and burning passion. The grace, the brilliant genius, the charming personality of the actress when she appeared at the invitation of the *grande dame*, alarmed the Duchess to the very depths of her soul, and it was probably at the very moment when she was showering praise upon her that Madame de Bouillon first thought of the crime which later rid her of a rival who was her superior.

Maurice and Adrienne still continued to meet after that evening, which for a few minutes had brought the new and the old favourite together. But with each day Adrienne felt more and more that Maurice was estranged and had betrayed her. This estrangement and betrayal caused her such suffering, that, formerly sweet and gentle, the young woman became violent and threatening. One evening when Maurice passed in front of the stage as Adrienne was reciting the line "In default of your arm lend me your sword", the unhappy woman snatched the sword from the actor who was giving her the cue, and hurled it after the Marshal. In spite of this exhibition of violence they met again the next day, the day after, and on several subsequent occasions. But there was no longer any confidence between them. Maurice was ill at ease, and Adrienne restless. Their *tête-à-têtes* dragged and yet Adrienne wished with all her heart that she had the power to prolong them, and it was with reluctance that Maurice of Saxony curtailed them.

While this beautiful love was slowly petering out, the Duchesse de Bouillon did not lose time. She

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studied ways of poisoning Mademoiselle Lecouvreur surely and without arousing suspicion The *abbé* Bouvet, whom Adrienne had known at Strasbourg and who at Paris had been one of her most consistent and devoted visitors was accosted three times by masked persons who offered to pay him large sums if he would consent to give to the *artiste* the sweets which would be delivered to him The *abbé* not only refused the proposal but warned Adrienne besides Four days after taking this step he was seized thrown into prison and it was not long before he was cross-examined The *abbé* repeated to the judge what he had said to Mademoiselle Lecouvreur and he persisted in its accuracy in spite of the efforts of his interrogator It is true that a few days later being put to the torture he said what they wanted to stop the atrocious sufferings inflicted on him

While the *abbé* Bouvet was groaning in prison Adrienne Lecouvreur had been seized with a strange illness at the beginning of February, 1730 She became weak languid thin and pale They talked of intestinal trouble but she had not one of the symptoms In spite of her suffering the *tragedienne* tried to conquer the malady and continued to act But at a performance in the early part of March her strength gave way despite all her efforts and she swooned on the stage at the beginning of the third act in which she was playing the principal rôle On the 15th March she wanted to tread the boards again and made her reappearance in the rôle of Jocasta She was so white that evening so weak and emaciated that everyone who saw her was struck by it and some wept from pity She died on the 20th of March 1730 five days

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after this performance. The illness which carried her off remained a mystery, no doctor could diagnose it, and even to-day her death is shrouded in doubt and uncertainty

Two of our renowned writers have been moved to celebrate in verse this premature and sad end of a great and charming *artiste*, in a play which has become famous, and which all Europe and part of America has applauded. Their work, which bears the name of our heroine, shows Adrienne dying, as she did in reality, a mysterious death, caused by her powerful rival. But in the play, Scribe and Ernest Legouvé have softened the death by the presence of the adored lover. Maurice of Saxony is represented as more than ever in love with Adrienne, in despair at the thought of losing her, and consoling her with all the strength of his burning passion. The manner, too, in which Adrienne is poisoned is artistic and romantic in the play. The tragedienne does not, in fact, die in a mysterious way, but after smelling some magnificent roses which she thinks have been sent to her by her loved one

As a matter of fact, Maurice of Saxony was not at all upset by the death of Adrienne Lecouvreur. He was not present to comfort and console her at the last. Adrienne, attacked slowly by a terrible sickness which was concealed neither in the scent nor in the brilliant colours of roses, died heart-broken over the indifference of her lover, who had reproached her for being too constant and too much in earnest. She died with no one near her but Voltaire, who swore to care for her daughters as a father, a vow which he kept to the letter.

So died, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the greatest of French tragediennes, at the age of

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thirty-eight deserted but in the fulness of her triumph, and at the zenith of her genius

She passed away at No 21, Rue du Marais St Germain (to-day the Rue Visconti) in the same house in which Racine had died and in which La Clairon the greatest interpreter of Voltaire's tragedies lived. After her death the church refused her religious burial as it had refused Molière. It was a great scandal that this gentle devoted clever young woman who died a victim of the vices of the great should have been deprived of the last rites of sympathy and respect which religion pays to the dead. Voltaire and many of her friends protested strongly against such an injustice. But the ashes of Adrienne Lecouvreur remained none the less on the banks of the Seine at the corner of the Rue de Bourgogne where the street porters had carried them secretly during the night following her death.

The same year in which the memory of the charming clever natural interpreter of the best of French dramatic works was thus humiliated and sacrificed to the prejudiced London accorded to its great actress of the day Mrs Oldfield who died in the capital on the 23rd of October 1730 the honour of interment in Westminster Abbey

The sole monument erected to the glory of Adrienne Lecouvreur was the epitaph written by an unknown hand several months after her death near to the place in which her remains had been flung

O passer by stop read and weep
Here in the same tomb lie
The Muses the Graces the Loves
With Adrienne Lecouvreur the glory of the stage

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THE heroine who is the subject of this chapter belonged to that refined and cultured society of the eighteenth century whose highest desire was to be witty, to have charming manners and to enjoy life. This society took up philosophy and social economy as an intellectual sport and because the great writers of the day had made philanthropy the fashion. But its principal interest lay in the keen pursuit of pleasure in all its forms. It sought every kind of enjoyment, from the noble enthusiasm for study down to the fretting emotions of a love far from platonic, and the most superficial sensations stirred by the delights of a skilfully and subtly furnished table, whose viands were washed down with wines as varied as they were delicious. Everyone took his pleasure as he fancied, in the most brazen way. The stern Diderot was nothing less than Mademoiselle Volland's lover. Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse was proud to publish her *liaison* with the Marquis de Mora, which, nevertheless, did not prevent her from dying of love for Guibert. The Président Hénault restored dignity to Madame du Deffand by making her his mistress. Voltaire's niece, Madame Denis, occupied so ill-defined a position in relation to her uncle that it was possible to write "She adores her uncle as a man quite as much as an uncle. Voltaire loves her dearly, laughs at her and respects her"¹. Duclos, the man of letters, wrote to a great lady with whom he was in love and whose

¹ Letter of Madame d'Epinay

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lover he aspired to be. Your brother in law wants to sleep with you you will be very foolish if you refuse him Even the Dauphine Marie-Antoinette dared to make a friend of Madame de Guéménéé who though married lived openly with the Duc de Congny

This environment reacted fatally on the girl who became Madame d' Epinay It was this environment combined with the mistaken education imposed by her mother which at first dragged our heroine into a life of scandal and deception

Madame d' Epinay was born Louise-Florence-Petronille Tardieu d' Esclavelles at Condé-sur l' Escant, on the 11th of March 1726 Her father was a distinguished officer of high military rank who belonged to a very good family her mother was Flemish by birth. Louise d' Esclavelles had the great misfortune to lose her father early This misfortune was all the more serious as the death of Monsieur d' Esclavelles left the family in difficult circumstances and the little girl's education remained entirely in the hands of a mother who was extremely fond of her no doubt, but whose fervent and narrow piety warped both her mind and her judgment Dominated by this piety Madame d' Esclavelles considered that to bring up her daughter well it was essential to break her will and to exact a blind and absolute obedience. When Louise was with her mother she had the right neither to think nor to exercise her will. She could not even have a preference. She had simply to obey

Her position as a poor relation intensified this state of things when despite the lively protests of Madame de Roncherolles an aristocratic aunt of Monsieur d' Esclavelles, the widow sent her daughter to be

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brought up by her sister, Madame de la Live de Bellegarde, who had married a wealthy farmer-general. In this home Louise d'Esclavelles was a drudge to the haughty, vain, foolish and hard Madame de Bellegarde as well as to her jealous, naughty and violent-tempered elder daughter Louise, who had already a malicious and sharp wit, judged them as they deserved, but she dared not show what she thought. This little person, retired into herself through fear, yet very intelligent, became, as she said later "Truthful without being frank", while the passive obedience exacted from her made her a creature without any will, incapable of self-guidance, and henceforward apt to submit to no matter what domineering influence. As Louise was keenly sensitive, had a romantic imagination, and a heart overflowing with tenderness, it is easy to understand how an education, which set out to destroy her will and self-confidence, would contribute to her unhappiness.

Events were not long in proving this. The de Bellegardes' eldest son, then called Monsieur de La Live, and older than Louise by two years, was attracted by his cousin's languorous black eyes, by her dreamy air, her grace and that all-pervading charm which enslaved every man who met her. He wished to make this artless loving creature whom he felt had no will, his own. To succeed in this he had only to look tenderly at her, to offer her flowers during the walks which the children of the house took together and to show pleasure at being in her company. After several weeks of these manœuvres, Louise dreamt of no-one but her cousin. So when, one fine day, he slipped into her hand a note in which he asked her to

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become his wife, she trembled from head to foot with joy and thought that heaven was opening at her feet. But Monsieur de la Live was barely fifteen years old at the time and his cousin thirteen. So they could only love each other in secret and speak of it in private. Louise made use of the feeling which she inspired to try to make her cousin less lazy but his chief endeavour was to gain sole possession of her heart. He wrote passionate love letters to excite her affections until a day came when the unhappy Louise spied on by her cousin's elder sister allowed her aunt to surprise her with one of those compromising notes in her bosom.

The storm was terrible. Madame de Bellegarde had always counted on her son's making a grand marriage when she had proof that this portionless niece whom she had taken in out of charity stood between her plan and her son. She could find for her no insults sufficiently violent nor treatment contemptuous enough. She sent for Madame d'Esclavelles whom she also loaded with insults and reproaches then she dismissed both women in the same way that one shows an unfaithful servant to the door.

Alone with her daughter Madame d'Esclavelles was harsher than Madame de Bellegarde and Louise trembling terrified at what she had done but madly in love with her cousin fell so dangerously ill that they feared for her life. Meanwhile Monsieur de la Live travelling for the first time on business under the care of a tutor drove the latter to despair by running into debt over actresses and by turning night into day. In spite of this he had no difficulty in making his fond, trembling artless cousin believe that he still

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loved her passionately and that he would always remain faithful to her

Madame de Bellegarde's premature death brought about a reconciliation between the two families and also the union for which Louise had suffered so much

The marriage took place in Paris on the 23rd of December, 1743. The bridegroom, who in future bore the name of Monsieur de la Live d'Epinay, brought as dowry three-hundred-thousand *livres* in money and twelve-thousand *livres* in diamonds, receiving two-thousand *livres* for his private purse. The bride had only thirty-thousand *livres* in money, twelve-thousand *livres* as represented by her trousseau, and eighteen-thousand *livres* in furniture. But her mother's brother, a Canon at Notre-Dame de Condé secured to her the possession of an estate which he owned. The young couple on payment of a very low rent went to live with Monsieur de Bellegarde where Madame d'Esclavelles had been ensconced as house-keeper. Thus in a flash Louise d'Esclavelles became the rich and happy wife of the man whom she admired more than anyone in the world and whom she loved with all the passion of her tender and romantic nature. These first months of marriage were idyllic. "What can be more delightful or happier", she wrote to young Madame de Maupeon, her cousin on her father's side, "than to be the darling wife of a man whom one loves and for whom one has suffered". Or, again, she describes to this same cousin, who was very dear to her, an intimate scene in her married life, which moves her even as she recalls it. "He was playing on the harpsichord", she told her, "I was on the arm of his chair, my left hand resting on the

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and my other hand turning over the leaves he never missed kissing it each time it passed in front of his lips O cousin how delicious it is to play music !

But while Madame d'Epinay was intoxicated with happiness the mother felt indignant that her daughter belonged to her less than formerly Each day she goes five minutes earlier to her room Whatever does she do ? Dress ? Fondle her husband ? ' wrote Madame d'Esclavelles in an outburst of anger to her brother the kind blunt Comte de Preux, only ten days after Madame d'Epinay's marriage. Madame d'Esclavelles also complained that her daughter rouged on the advice of her husband liked going to the play with him and forgot those austere principles which she had taught her In short she wanted Louise to be as she was before her marriage and to destroy Monsieur d'Epinay's influence over his wife.

Madame d'Epinay who was deeply attached to her mother but at the same time madly in love with her husband, was caught between two cross currents She wanted to please and make concessions to each and only succeeded in vexing both and doing herself much harm.

Madame d'Esclavelle's tyranny forced the young husband to go out alone in the evening more and more — a dangerous habit for a man with a past like that of Monsieur d'Epinay who had a frivolous fickle character and an excessive love of spending and of luxury and who was aware that the bulk of his father's immense fortune as well as the very remunerative position of *farmer general* would one day be his So his nocturnal expeditions were soon lengthened Soon too under

the pretext of not disturbing his wife's slumbers, he insisted that she should occupy a separate room. Just at first he visited her every evening when he came home, but, ere long ashamed of the condition in which he often returned and also of the lateness of the hour which the clock revealed, he carefully avoided his wife's room. Madame d'Epinay's black eyes, her love, and something touching about her, no doubt still pleased the husband, but Monsieur d'Epinay knew that a kiss or an avowal of love next day would be sufficient to keep this fond, sweet, simple creature under the conjugal yoke.

So he struggled less and less against his coarse and selfish proclivities. Two months after his marriage he returned home one night from supper with the Chevalier de Canaples, intoxicated and sick from over-eating. Louise, who heard her husband groaning, ran to his bedside and nursed him tenderly through the night. But in the morning she considered herself justified in telling him very gently that he could have avoided much suffering had he spent the previous evening with her instead of going to the Chevalier de Canaples. The remark was not to Monsieur d'Epinay's taste. He sulked with his wife for a whole week, and went off again the self-same day at half past two to continue the entertainment.

Madame d'Epinay, heart-sick and rebuked by her mother for having criticised her husband, addressed a long tale of woe to good Monsieur d'Affrey, her guardian. "Alas!" she said to him, palpitating with love for her unworthy husband, "Alas! Can I have a will other than his?"

At the end of six months, Madame d'Epinay was

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forced to recognize that her husband had deceived her contracted debts, and spent considerable sums of money on a dancer at the Opéra Geneviève Claude Rainteau, called de Verrière ravishingly pretty but so unintelligent that she was nick-named *la Belle et le Bête* '

Madame d'Epinay's love survived this discovery. She still hoped to win back her husband. Had he not often told her that men did not love paid women, and that the only woman to whom they cleave is the one to whom they give their name and who is the mother of their children? Now it was just at this time that Madame d'Epinay herself was expecting to become a mother. She retired to la Chevrette the magnificent family estate of the de Bellegardes in order to make preparations in seclusion for the coming event and to think more of the beloved husband who was on circuit as farmer-general for the first time for a period of not less than six months.

When the time drew near for the birth of her child Madame d'Epinay resolved to nurse it herself and make it more her own and in this way tighten the bond which united her to her husband. Had not Rousseau inspired all fond mothers with this desire? But this is what her husband wrote on the subject. "You nurse your child? I nearly died of laughter. Do you imagine that I should consent to anything so ridiculous? What old wives have been putting this idea into your head? The child born was Louis d'Epinay.

Not only did Madame d'Epinay refrain from nursing him but she tried to please her husband in another and totally different way. Like him she threw herself headlong into society and a life of pleasure. She

became the intimate friend of the Prince de Conti's mistress, of Mademoiselle d'Ette and her lover, the Chevalier de Valory, of the actor Francœur. She countenanced the *liaison* between her young and sprightly cousin, Madame d'Houdetot, and Monsieur St de Lambert; she considered Madame Maupeon justified in boxing the ears of a husband whom she did not love for pestering her when she was dressing, and she accepted friendly lessons in harmony and composition from the rich and captivating Monsieur Dupin de Francueil, a farmer-general like her husband, and an accomplished type of agreeable gentleman of the eighteenth century.

But these means were no more successful than her first idea. She, who only went into society in order to be with her husband, scarcely ever met him. "My husband is the man of whom I see least", she wrote "I used to go into society to please him, and now I am driven there, I cannot be alone any longer, and I cannot bear to think of my husband, because his behaviour is breaking my heart" Monsieur d'Epinay was, in fact, making himself more and more notorious in connection with the two sisters Verrière. He was even brazen enough to install them both in the village adjoining La Chevrette, while his wife, his father, his aunt and the many friends whom they entertained were in residence. The amount which Monsieur d'Epinay spent on these two women and the scandal caused by their presence were so great that the Minister banished him to Poitou. Previous to this, in August, 1747, Madame d'Epinay had given birth to a second child, a girl, who died a short time afterwards.

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too, had a charming face, was good at all forms of exercise, and he seemed so kind. So Madame d'Epinay confided all her troubles to him and Monsieur de Francueil offered to the disillusioned little wife a pure and disinterested friendship "I shall be able to prove", wrote Madame d'Epinay in her diary, "that one can have the strongest and tenderest feelings for a man and still be faithful to one's duties"

Yes, with a strong will one can. But Madame d'Epinay could not. After being violently angry one evening with Monsieur de Francueil for his bold overtures she yielded to him the next day "I want to do my duty", she wrote in her diary, "but a passion stronger than reason and virtue combined intoxicates me, drags me along with it and brings me into continual conflict with myself"

Monsieur de Francueil was a delicate and fond lover, but exceedingly fickle. Although his love for Madame d'Epinay was the most serious in his life, he deceived her after three years, as her husband had deceived her after six months . . . and with the same woman! Madame d'Epinay at this period suffered the most cruel mortifications and the greatest weariness of spirit. Calumny exaggerated her fault, and several doors were closed against her. All the men who were fascinated by her eyes and attracted by her charm considered themselves at liberty to tell her so in the most unambiguous language. The young women in whose virtue she had believed disclosed themselves to her as frivolous flirts. Several even dragged her along with them to cover up their intrigues and she, even more weak with herself than with others, continued to see Francueil, who carried on his deception

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But about this time Madame d'Epinay's love for her husband was on the wane. Notwithstanding the immense tenderness of her nature it was impossible that her love should stand against the continual humiliations inflicted by her husband: his lies, his follies and his fantastic extravagance which threatened to ruin their child. When Monsieur d'Epinay returned from circuit in 1748, his wife was merely bored at having to feign a pleasure which she did not feel. A painful illness which attacked her sometime after her husband's return, and to which he himself was no stranger, ended all intimacy between them. In future only social ties kept them together. Financial ties also were almost severed by a monetary separation, rendered all the more necessary as Madame d'Epinay on the death of the Comte de Preux inherited the whole of her uncle's fortune. From this time also her father in law tried to benefit her as much as possible to the detriment of Monsieur d'Epinay, as transpired at his death which occurred some years later.

And now that Madame d'Epinay had broken the idol which had shed so warm a radiance over those first dreams of love and early years of married life she was stricken by the emptiness of her heart. If this loving creature whose will had been killed was to go on living she must have someone to lean on. Her heart could not carry the weight of its sorrow alone. She must confide in a kind and good friend who would restore her lost courage. Mademoiselle d'Ette urged her to seek such a friend in Monsieur Dupin de Francueil. Had they not the same tastes for music for literature for art? And then how talented he was! How witty! How distinguished! He was handsome

MADAME D'EPINAY

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MADAME D'EPINAY

while remaining a perfect gentleman in his attitude towards her

A more unjust calumny than the others helped Madame d'Epina to emerge from this slough. Her young sister-in-law de Jully whose love-intrigues she had covered up in spite of herself had just died at the age of twenty-eight, carried off by smallpox. When at the point of death the young woman asked her sister-in-law to destroy all the papers in her desk tell tale evidence of her flirtations Madame d'Epina burnt everything unread but the day after the funeral Monsieur de Jully accused her of having taken advantage of his wife's death to burn the account of debts which Monsieur d'Epina had admitted he owed his brother de Jully d'Epina. Appearances were against Madame d'Epina all the more so as she neither would nor could defend herself and because it was well known that in spite of their separation she still gave her husband financial help in times of crises.

But there was one man in Paris who believed in her innocence and who fought in a duel to defend her. This man was Grimm. He had come to Paris as tutor to the Comte de Schomberg's children but had soon taken his place in the highest society and become an habitué at the salons of the Duc d'Orléans Baron d'Holbach and Madame Geoffrin while at the same time forming a close friendship with Diderot and establishing very sympathetic relations with all the Encyclopædistes and philosophers of the day. His powerful intellect reason sense of justice and perspicacity which have been so deservedly praised by Saint-Beuve made him divine the innocence of this woman who put up no defence. He was wounded in

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the arm in the duel which he fought on her behalf, and as compensation, begged permission to call on Madame d'Esclavelles and Madame d'Epinay. Rousseau undertook to prefer the request, which was enthusiastically granted, and when Grimm called on the mother and daughter they overwhelmed him with their gratitude

So began that friendship between Grimm and Madame d'Epinay which made a new woman of her. On the fourth day after his first visit, Grimm had the satisfaction of learning that he had not been deceived in Madame d'Epinay. A lawyer had just recovered among his papers the d'Epinay-Jully account which Madame d'Epinay had been accused of treacherously burning.

After being admitted to Madame d'Epinay's confidence, Grimm very quickly gauged her. He perceived her talent, her taste, her delicacy, her grace, but also her vacillation and indiscretion, and the lack of guiding principle in her conduct. He resolved to be her good genius, to help her to strengthen everything that was excellent in her character, but also to modify that which left much to be desired. So he invited a confidence, which he gained completely, and from that day became Madame d'Epinay's counsellor and friend before changing a little later into her lover.

Madame d'Epinay's new friend was totally unlike any of the men by whom up till now she had been surrounded. Gauffcourt, the publisher, who was very intimate with Grimm, nick-named him "the white tyrant", and the Encyclopædists claimed that his friendship was despotic. So Grimm did not lull

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A more unjust calumny than the others helped Madame d'Epina to emerge from this slough. Her young sister-in-law de Jully whose love-intrigues she had covered up in spite of herself had just died at the age of twenty-eight carried off by smallpox. When at the point of death the young woman asked her sister-in-law to destroy all the papers in her desk tell tale evidence of her flirtations Madame d'Epina burnt everything unread but the day after the funeral Monsieur de Jully accused her of having taken advantage of his wife's death to burn the account of debts which Monsieur d'Epina had admitted he owed his brother de Jully d'Epina. Appearances were against Madame d'Epina all the more so as she neither would nor could defend herself and because it was well known that in spite of their separation she still gave her husband financial help in times of crises.

But there was one man in Paris who believed in her innocence and who fought in a duel to defend her. This man was Grimm. He had come to Paris as tutor to the Comte de Schomberg's children but had soon taken his place in the highest society and become an habitué at the salons of the Duc d'Orléans Baron d'Holbach and Madame Geoffrin while at the same time forming a close friendship with Diderot and establishing very sympathetic relations with all the Encyclopædistes and philosophers of the day. His powerful intellect reason sense of justice and perspicacity which have been so deservedly praised by Saint-Beuve made him divine the innocence of this woman who put up no defence. He was wounded in

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the arm in the duel which he fought on her behalf, and as compensation, begged permission to call on Madame d'Esclavelles and Madame d'Epinay. Rousseau undertook to prefer the request, which was enthusiastically granted, and when Grimm called on the mother and daughter they overwhelmed him with their gratitude.

So began that friendship between Grimm and Madame d'Epinay which made a new woman of her. On the fourth day after his first visit, Grimm had the satisfaction of learning that he had not been deceived in Madame d'Epinay. A lawyer had just recovered among his papers the d'Epinay-Jully account which Madame d'Epinay had been accused of treacherously burning.

After being admitted to Madame d'Epinay's confidence, Grimm very quickly gauged her. He perceived her talent, her taste, her delicacy, her grace; but also her vacillation and indiscretion, and the lack of guiding principle in her conduct. He resolved to be her good genius, to help her to strengthen everything that was excellent in her character, but also to modify that which left much to be desired. So he invited a confidence, which he gained completely, and from that day became Madame d'Epinay's counsellor and friend before changing a little later into her lover.

Madame d'Epinay's new friend was totally unlike any of the men by whom up till now she had been surrounded. Gauffcourt, the publisher, who was very intimate with Grimm, nick-named him "the white tyrant", and the Encyclopædists claimed that his friendship was despotic. So Grimm did not kill

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Madame d'Epinaу with flattering compliments or hollow insipidities

He offered her for the most part advice and if his counsels were always excellent they were also often severe and painful. For instance, when Madame d'Epinaу without first consulting Grimm offered Rousseau hospitality at The Hermitage on the estate of La Chevrette Grimm immediately wrote to her

You have done him a bad service in giving him the Hermitage but you have done yourself a far worse service. If you refuse but once to be at his command he will accuse you of having solicited him to live with you. Already I see the germ of his accusations in the tone of the letters which you have shown me. What perspicacity but at the same time what firmness this letter reveals! Just at first Madame d'Epinaу was perhaps annoyed by its dictatorial tone but some months later she must have been struck by its prophetic truth. For Rousseau installed at The Hermitage on the 9th of April 1756 did in fact accuse Madame d'Epinaу in the spring of the following year of having written an anonymous letter to Monsieur d'Houdetot to prevent Rousseau from becoming Madame d'Houdetot's lover. This infamous accusation was all the more unjust in that Madame d'Epinaу had done everything to exculpate Madame d'Houdetot and in an eloquent letter to Grimm had neglected nothing to prove Madame d'Houdetot's complete innocence.

The lies in *The Confessions* of Jean Jacques Rousseau did Madame d'Epinaу even more harm. Indeed many have misjudged her by reason of these *Confessions*. Grimm was still more dictatorial with Madame

d'Epinay in matters relating to Monsieur de Francueil. He forced his friend to break definitely with the man who had deceived her, and to cease even to know him socially. "By not resenting certain treatment", he said, "you fail in the respect which you owe to yourself" Or again: "I have often told you that you do not feel insults as you should" "I found it very difficult", said Madame d'Epinay herself, "to forget his harshness, despite all the pains he took to atone for it"

But if Grimm was harsh with Madame d'Epinay, whom he esteemed more than anyone else had done, it was to make her worthier of herself "How I value those who like you and recognize your worth!" he wrote to her in all the sincerity of his soul and the soundness of his judgment Madame d'Epinay, moreover, completely realized the value of Grimm's friendship She was thoroughly alive to the fact that his manner of loving her differed wholly from that of Monsieur d'Epinay or Monsieur de Francueil Soon her poor bruised spirit revived under the influence of this strong friendship, and gradually Grimm perceived that he could restore her to her natural self Nature had never intended her to lead this irregular life into which she had been dragged for several years by her husband's misconduct and the loose habits of the period Her innate delicacy, goodness and refinement, her power of observation, sense of justice and her natural taste for literature designed her for a far nobler and more interesting career

Madame d'Epinay's state of health helped Grimm in his task of re-creation She was suffering so distressingly from that terrible illness which was one day to

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carry her off, that she decided to go to Switzerland to consult the celebrated doctor Tronchin. This took her from the milieu which had done her so much harm and left her freer to yield to the beneficent influence of Grimm. Monsieur d' Epinay wanted to accompany his wife to Switzerland so that he might appear to have broken with the Vernières and by this ruse obtain further gifts from the woman whom he had already nearly ruined indeed at the time of her journey Madame d' Epinay had no more than an income of seventeen thousand francs. The husband and wife with only two or three servants left Paris on October 30th, 1757. On the journey Madame d' Epinay was at the point of death but when once she had arrived at Geneva she was greatly soothed by the medical treatment. Tronchin's skill and science were to ease her pain for several years.

On the 16th of November Monsieur d' Epinay left his wife and henceforward Madame d' Epinay could divide her time between looking after her health her correspondence with Grimm and her new Swiss friends of whom among many Voltaire was naturally the most important. Voltaire liked her exceedingly 'May this cursed north wind' he wrote 'spare your great black eyes and your poor nerves'. The beauty of those great black eyes as well as of her mind have been sung by Voltaire in verse and prose and as long as Madame d' Epinay remained in Switzerland he neglected no opportunity of having this beautiful philosopher as he called her with him as much as possible. It is but fitting to say that Tronchin very often accompanied his interesting patient when she dined out and that Voltaire by his pressing invitations

to Madame d'Epinay increased his chances of seeing Tronchin, who would no longer obey the summons of his "*malade imaginaire*" But, even without Tronchin, Madame d'Epinay had a great attraction for Voltaire

But it was Grimm who filled her thoughts "I am sure Grimm despises me", she would say over and over again, and this mournful obsession tortured her She would have liked, too, to convince Diderot of the good intentions of her heart—Diderot, Grimm's best friend, who had persisted in his belief that she was a schemer! Afar off, Grimm sensed her sufferings, and, on hearing that Tronchin wanted to keep his patient for two years, he made up his mind to leave Paris and join her

Her joy over Grimm's arrival was so great that she seemed to be cured of her sickness Love had restored her health He remained with her for eight months and during those eight months, Madame d'Epinay was thoroughly happy Never before had she known a happiness so sure, so complete, so exhilarating as this which she owed to Grimm She seemed to love for the first time in her life Grimm profited by the love with which he inspired her to transform her into the lady of his dreams He encouraged her literary tastes, her gifts of observation and criticism, in short, everything that was good in her, so effectually that he made of her a woman above the ordinary

When Madame d'Epinay returned to Paris in October, 1759, she herself marvelled that she could ever have taken any pleasure in the society of her former friends Henceforward she changed her set She sought to collect the thinkers and philosophers around her, the serious people whom Grimm had taught her to like

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She began energetically and sincerely the task of writing her admirable *Mémoirs*, and when the daughter to whom she had given birth in 1750, and who had married Monsieur de Balzunce made her a grandmother Madame d' Epinay earnestly begged that she might have the arduous pleasure of educating her grand daughter

Madame d' Epinay at this period was nearly ruined for her fortune which had been almost entirely squandered by her husband was now completely dissipated through the follies of her son Louis d' Epinay. But the equability of her temper remained unimpaired. Often and sometimes to its advantage, she took the place of Grimm and Meister in editing the *Courrier Littéraire* addressed by them to the Princes of Northern Europe. She wrote an admirable book for the child to whose education she devoted herself full of tenderness psychology and artistic delicacy. This book gained the Monthyon prize in January 1783.

Three months later this woman whose life had been so hectic and broken died at Paris, completely reinstated by the nobility of the last twenty three years of her life. Her husband only preceded her to the tomb by one year.

Madame d' Epinay's *Mémoirs* the veracity of which is established to-day are the best refutation that posterity can have of the lies told by Rousseau, Duclos and her other detractors. When one recognizes how superficial and pleasure loving was the world in which she lived one wonders how it was possible for this woman to react so completely in the second part of her life against her past errors and to give as she did such proofs of nobility and courage.

ELÉONORE DE JEAN DE MANVILLE, COMTESSE DE SABRAN

ELÉONORE DE JEAN DE MANVILLE, who later became Comtesse de Sabran, was born in March, 1749. Although spring that year was ushered in with sunshine and flowers, the atmosphere about the cradle of the newborn baby, a pretty little girl, was heavy with gloom and sorrow. The mother, Madame de Jean de Manville, *née de Montigny*, one of the most magnificent and most admired women of her day, had paid with her life for the happiness of being a mother for the second time. For two whole years she had passionately longed for a girl to console her for the feeble-mindedness of her eldest daughter. When at last the gift, which she had so ardently desired, was bestowed, she had to leave this world without knowing whether the new-comer might not also be stricken with the same affliction as her sister.

The baby, deprived of its mother, remained under the care of a selfish father, whose affection was confined to those who ministered to his pleasure. The two girls who could give him nothing (the eldest would always require as much attention as an infant) had, therefore, no attractions for their father. So Monsieur Jean de Manville hastened to seek in a second marriage the joy and amusements which he considered indispensable to his well-being. Soon the two orphans were not only neglected in their stepmother's house, but

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ill treated as well. Their father did not trouble himself about them at all and the new Madame Jean de Manville endeavoured to make the young girls for whom she had not the slightest affection as small an expense and as little of a nuisance as possible.

Their maternal grandmother Madame de Montigny in spite of her age, could not bear to see the children of her family degraded in this manner. She begged her son in-law to commit the little girls to her charge and soon the two orphans were placed under their grandmother's roof. Nevertheless, Eléonore and her sister were not to enjoy at their grandmother's side the tenderness of which the little invalid stood so much in need and for which the loving heart of the youngest craved. There was nothing tender about Madame de Montigny. She was a cold dignified woman with a proud air of distinction who considered that severity and an abstinence from any manifestation of feeling were the essential principles of education and it was in accordance with these ideas that she brought up her grandchildren. She even delighted in spoiling many of their pleasures believing that disappointments would help to elevate their characters. One day Eléonore who was out walking with her grandmother met her favourite uncle in the street on his way to bring her a beautiful bunch of artificial flowers. The child adored flowers. The gift of this bunch caused her intense joy which showed itself in the expression on her face and the sparkle in her eye. Her grandmother deemed it an excellent opportunity to inflict suffering on the little girl. She ordered her to throw the bunch away at once under pretext of the smell of the flowers making her feel exceedingly unwell.

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Eléonore obeyed without having the right to remark that since they were artificial flowers they could not have any scent. She dared not even let fall the tears which gathered in her eyes when her grandmother gave the cruel order.

The grief felt by the little girl in connection with a piece of work which she was preparing for her father's birthday was, perhaps, even more bitter. In spite of Monsieur de Jean's indifference to her, Eléonore was devotedly fond of him. As soon as she considered that she could draw passably, she took the greatest delight in working for months with the most courageous application on a huge sketch which she intended to present to her father on his birthday. The sketch was nearly finished and Monsieur de Manville's birthday close at hand, when one evening Madame de Montigny entered the apartment where Eléonore was working. Without saying a word her grandmother went up to the sketch, looked at it and tore it in pieces. She then left the room as she had entered it, without addressing a single word to her grandchild.

It was in this chilling atmosphere, under the continual menace of painful vexations, with no power over the disposal of her time or in the choice of reading, that Eléonore de Jean reached a marriageable age. Her dismal adolescence had only been lightened by two years passed as a boarder in a convent, and by the kindness of her maternal uncle, who cherished a very warm affection for her. Eléonore's education was now finished, and her family desired to see her married without delay. As she had a large fortune and a beauty as piquant as it was uncommon, admirers thronged round her.

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The boldest amongst them was a sort of greybeard Tartufe, posing as a young lover who under pretext of being bound to Monsieur de Jean by ties of old friendship aspired to be chosen as his daughter's husband. But he was speedily to discover that Eléonore had very little liking for him. Thereupon as all he troubled about was the fortune he took advantage of the decay of Monsieur de Jean's mental faculties to dominate his will which had always been weak, and obtained from him the hand of the poor imbecile. Everything was arranged for this revolting marriage when only a few days before the date fixed for the ceremony the unhappy young girl died leaving her lover overwhelmed by the loss of her dowry.

But our cavalier was not long in changing his mind again. Eléonore's dowry was almost doubled by her sister's death. It was certainly worth while making every effort to win her. Moreover no-one seemed to have the protection of the young girl's interests at heart. She herself gentle shy accustomed to suffer and to obey without protest would be easy to dominate and to influence. So our cavalier set himself the task of forcing Mademoiselle de Jean to marry him. But she whom he had thought so tractable was not to be subjugated. Nothing would make her deviate from her formal refusal not only to marry him but even to listen to the most inoffensive of his explanations and entreaties.

Our cavalier definitely turned down each one of the numerous coxcombs and good for nothings who revolved round Eléonore's dowry thought the game won. But suddenly this young girl of nineteen who until now had never been allowed to have a will of her

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own, who had scarcely had more than a glimpse of society and its pleasures, who, it might have been imagined, would be intoxicated by the call of youth and by the pleasures now for the first time within her reach, rejected all these young men with their pretensions to love and admiration, and offered her hand to a hero of sixty-nine

This hero was the Comte Admiral de Sabran. Eléonore would have no-one else as a husband. When the Admiral, troubled by the disparity of their years, observed to her that in age he was more suited to be her father than her husband, Eléonore ecstatically replied that she admired him so much that he had no age in her eyes, she was blind to everything but his worth

He was, indeed, noted for his valour. In his early youth he had distinguished himself as commander of the *Content*. In 1756, he had largely contributed to the defeat of the English Admiral, John Byng, off Minorca. When on the *Centaure*, he had been attacked by four British ships simultaneously and had kept them at bay by fighting like a lion, only yielding to superior numbers. His merit was so well-known, that on returning from captivity in England, Louis XV signified his wish to present him to the Queen himself. More than this, the King in making the presentation, was pleased to recall the fact that through his illustrious ancestry the Comte was allied to the House of France. "He is one of us," said the King, almost familiarly. The Comte de Sabran was, in fact, descended from a sister of Marguerite de Provence, wife of Louis IX.

Nevertheless, Eléonore's uncle was alarmed at the thought of so old a husband for her, however distinguished he might be. Urged by the love which he

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bore for his niece he pointed out that the Admiral had no money and that he was going on for seventy I shall be everything to him he will love and protect me was the sole answer which Monsieur de Montigny drew from the young girl

So the marriage took place and the Comte de Sabran made his young wife the tenderest the most devoted and the best of husbands His face formerly stern was henceforth all smiles and sweetness, for he desired to surround his youthful companion with everything which was agreeable and pleasant With him Eléonore was happy for the first time in her life she knew the restful invigorating joy of being loved and appreciated.

The Comte was not only delighted with but also proud of his young Countess so much so, that he was impatient to introduce her at Court He knew that she would be admired if not as profoundly as he admired her at least for her beauty, which was so different from that of all the other women and for the exquisite charm which unconsciously emanated from her

Eléonore de Sabran charmed both minds and hearts and was astonished if anyone told her so Thus it was her candour her naturalness and the freshness of her mind more than anything else which enraptured the Court She was unlike any of the other women who appeared there She seemed to bring with her that honesty frankness innocence and wholesome youth which is unacquainted with artifice and dissimulation This impression was still further enhanced by her shyness In spite of the gushing and flattering compliments showered on her at the very outset her

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studied Latin with the Abbé Dellille. Turgot in logical and lengthy talks opened her mind to economic and social questions. Malesherbes one of the best friends of the house initiated her into the intricacies of the law and the activities of the philanthropists. Monsieur de Sabran never ceased to admire his wife and to bless the fate which had given her to him. In 1771, their happiness was augmented by the immense joy of a little daughter who was declared by everyone to be marvellously beautiful. Less than two years later the little girl had a brother who received at baptism the name of Elzéar. At the birth of his son Monsieur de Sabran, trembling with happiness exclaimed with emotion, "I have now nothing more to wish for." Each day he enjoyed more passionately the possession of his precious Countess and of his two dear little children, of whom both he and his wife were equally proud.

But the years began to tell on Monsieur de Sabran. The Countess had now to render him a thousand little services to surround him with care and precautions as he had done her during the first months of their marriage. Eléonore would scarcely leave her husband for his health caused her anxiety. But a great event was to lead her to modify this resolution.

Louis XV died on the 10th of May, 1774 and his grandson who succeeded him was to be crowned at Rheims as Louis XVI. Madame de Sabran's numerous friends at Court in particular Madame de Marsan, Madame Clothilde's governess, strove to get the Countess chosen as one of the ladies in the suite of the Princesses who were accompanying the King and Queen Marie-Antoinette to Rheims. The honour was great

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to Amzi the home of Monsieur de Sabran her husband's nephew. There she remained for a whole year, and would have prolonged her stay had it not been for the earnest entreaties of her friends. They considered that Eléonore de Sabran, young, fascinating, witty as she was, ought not to give herself up to idle regrets for a husband whom without being aware of it, she mourned more as a daughter than as a wife. Her friends prevailed on her and at the beginning of the summer of 1776 the Comtesse de Sabran settled in Paris in the elegant house of Bouret, the financier which she had just bought.

This house was situated in the Rue du Faubourg, Sainte Honoré quite near the Champs Elysées. Madame de Sabran invested it with her own individuality by personally superintending with her pure artistic and original taste the alterations in Bouret's magnificent decorations. These decorations were too ornate and massive to satisfy her innate sense of beauty and harmony.

A huge park with green lawns extended at the back of the dwelling. This park was at once the delight of the children and the charm of the house. It was from this home, which she loved as a friend, that Madame de Sabran set out one winter evening in 1777 to attend a fête at the house of the Maréchale de Luxembourg. The young Countess for some time past had been going into society again. Although no-one could ever accuse her of the least coquetry that evening urged by some hidden impulse she devoted special attention to her beautiful *cendré* hair and to her dress which was as simple as it was artistic. Eléonore de Sabran never used rouge at an epoch when all the

women of her world laid it on thickly But the mischievous glint in her eyes, the grace with which she moved her little feet as she walked or danced, her naturalness, her simplicity, her distinction and the intelligence that streamed from her, compelled and maintained quite another kind of admiration than that called forth by rouge and powder One of the Maréchale de Luxembourg's guests, her own grand-nephew, was deeply stirred on this particular evening As Eléonore de Sabran, crowned with her magnificent hair and adorned only by her personal attractions, passed through Madame de Luxembourg's sumptuously furnished *salons*, the Chevalier de Boufflers, one of the most popular men of his day among women, fell madly in love with the charms of the young Countess

The Chevalier de Boufflers was very well known and much criticized by his contemporaries His freaks had on several occasions shocked the people of his world, his capricious and numerous *amours* had caused tears to be shed by many a woman and provided entertaining matter for many a conversation, his biting, witty verse had wounded more than one love of a day Was Eléonore de Sabran going to be the latest victim of the Chevalier's fickle and mischievous affections ?

Those of the Maréchale de Luxembourg's guests who observed Monsieur de Boufflers' emotion when he saw the young widow, believed so But at the sight of Eléonore the Don Juan of yesterday experienced a feeling quite foreign to him It was not this woman's beauty which captivated him It was something far more elusive, more transcendent than a physical

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sensation which caused the tumult in his soul. He was caught up in an atmosphere of freshness of pure delight of rapturous and lofty sentiments such as no other woman had inspired before. For this reason the Chevalier de Boufflers' new passion was quite unlike any which he had previously felt. To win the affections of this beautiful woman he was ready to do what he had never done namely to adopt her ways to share both her tastes and her desires.

The very next day after the Maréchale de Luxembourg's reception Boufflers obtained an introduction to the Countess at her house through one of his friends the Prince de Ligne. Having received permission to call again he sought merely to interest and stimulate the mind and talents of the woman whom he esteemed too highly to venture on a declaration of love. It is true that when writing to her he observed that if he possessed her talent for painting he would paint a portrait of himself kneeling at her feet and that from among the verses he had composed he sang her a roundelay of which the first quatrain ran

Beauty an air
These things are naught to me.
Who would be fair
Like her like her must be.¹

But these were exceedingly mild hints for the eighteenth century and especially for the Chevalier de Boufflers. In reality so that he might often meet the Countess and pass several hours daily in her society and enjoy her picturesque varied and animated conversation so full of sympathy malice and wit which Madame Vigée

¹ "Etre folle être belle
Ce n'est rien que tout cela
Il faut être comme celle
Comme celle que voilà !

Le Brun has described as "A magic-lantern of ideas", the Chevalier joined in the course of Latin lessons which the Abbé Delille had begun to give Eléonore during the admiral's life-time. Then he took an interest in the children, giving the Countess very shrewd advice in regard to them; he began to love the two little ones, for their mother's sake in the first instance, and afterwards for their own. Later, he took to practising music with Madame de Sabran and even, a terrible ordeal for one who was never still for a second, sat to the young woman for his portrait.

This was, however, too high a trial for the Chevalier. One morning when Eléonore was getting ready for the sitting she discovered pinned to her easel some verses written by him which ended in the two following lines

"When my portrait is a speaking likeness
It will tell you that I love you!"¹

The definite declaration of love which the Chevalier had so long refrained from uttering escaped through the medium of his pen. Now the Countess knew that he whom she desired as a friend, with whom she ardently wished to be able freely to exchange views and ideas, whom she wanted to bind to her by reciprocal feelings of affection and trust, was consumed with a passion which frightened her and which she had no desire to share. She realized that he only delighted in her mind in order the more easily to reach her heart. She realized also that she had spared no pains to make herself charming to the Chevalier, to have lengthy conversations with him and to welcome him with

¹ "Quand mon portrait sera parlant,
Il vous dira que je vous aime!"

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smiles which would never have been half so winning or friendly in the case of another. But Eléonore de Sabran did not want to be the slave of love. She fought with all the strength of her will and her love of independence against a sentiment whose exacting demands torments and complications she foresaw. She felt that the woman who had no lover was far more mistress of her joys and troubles than the woman who loved and was loved. She told herself that more often than not passion inflicted great suffering and brought but little happiness. So she decided to harden her heart against the love of the Chevalier de Boufflers to treat him gently as one treats the ungratifiable whims of a delicate child but to give him no sort of hope. Chaste and inexperienced the Comtesse de Sabran thought it would be easy to act in accordance with her intention. But the mysterious aching void which she already felt in her heart might have warned her that it was too late now to think of resistance. Love had invaded the heart of Eléonore before she was aware of it.

But Madame de Sabran would not admit defeat. To the Chevalier's declaration of love she replied with the counter proposal of a firm and wholesome friendship. She offered when the time should come for him to leave Paris and rejoin his regiment to exchange letters with him in which they would live completely in their thoughts their feelings and their opinions. But in this correspondence there was not to be a single word of love. The Chevalier would call Madame de Sabran his sister and Eléonore would call him her brother. Both of them would speak to each other like a very much attached and devoted brother and sister.

Each of them would thus be able to count on the solid, profound, restful and disinterested affection of the other

The Chevalier agreed to everything that the young woman wished, however little he himself might be satisfied. Sometimes he told himself that this friendship was but the first step towards Eléonore's love, which he cherished more and more each day; sometimes, on the contrary, discouraged and almost reduced to despair, he envisaged nothing but sadness and gloom for the future of this love. It was on this account that he wrote from Normandy, where he was first quartered after parting from Madame de Sabran, then from Brittany, where he went next, letters full of dejection and of touching, sorrowful candour.

At this period, the Comtesse de Sabran's letters were much more lively, less intimate and less emotional than those of her friend. The young woman kept her word, she wrote to the Chevalier as a sister. But every time that she saw Boufflers, the struggle which she maintained against her love became less violent. The Chevalier appealed to her more and more, because, although she did not realize it, he supplied all the needs of her nature. This woman who chose an old husband out of admiration for the greatness of his mind, had never known passion in her marriage; she had venerated, tended and mourned the Admiral, but she had never felt for him the transports of love. Nevertheless, Eléonore had a passionate nature. She hungered for violent emotions and intoxicating raptures. No one roused these in her more than the Chevalier de Boufflers. The same things attracted both; he shared her tastes, and her dislike of all that was ordinary and vulgar. Like her, he adored music,

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power and everything that was artistic and distinguished. Even 'tis the beneath the appearance of a girl. When he had the disposition of an art, and the beauty of a woman. She recognized that he contained all the contraries and that there was not a terrible creature in heaven or on earth.

Gocande Madame de Sabran had no valid excuse for persisting in her cruelty

But the Countess thought otherwise. She was more determined than ever not to allow the transports of her heart to outweigh the principles of a virtuous woman. She did not regulate her conduct in accordance with the views of her world, but in accordance with the dictates of her conscience. She neither wished to have to blush to herself nor before her beloved children. So she repulsed the Chevalier de Boufflers. She withdrew from Paris and sought in travel a wholesome antidote to her passion. On her return to the capital she went much more into society than had been her wont. She devoted herself more completely than ever to art. But nothing could soothe the pangs of love.

Eléonore de Sabran suffered long and deeply. Month after month, she fought her passion, but never succeeded in abating it. In April, 1781, she wrote to the Chevalier, "While I think of it, please do not 'thee and thou me' in your letters."¹ But it was the cry of the stag at bay. By the end of this self-same month, at the beginning of spring, the fourth since the birth of their friendship, the all too-faithful Countess, tormented and distraught, found Paris too close for her health, and irritating to her mind. She needed open air and the bracing quiet of the country to restore her physical and moral energy. This need becoming imperative caused her to leave the capital much earlier than usual. She went to Monseigneur de Sabran, her husband's nephew, to recruit amid the salubrious surroundings of Anizi.

But it was the delicious time of the year when

¹ Quoted from *The Chevalier de Boufflers*, by Nesta H. Webster.

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nature is drunken with life "the time", as gentle La Fontaine expresses it, 'when everything in the world loves and multiplies' The dog-roses trembled under the kisses of the spring sun and the bold daisies, displaying their white petals and golden hearts among the grass, exclaimed in their own language 'We are lovely because we have loved.' The fields of Anizy failed to restore peace to Madame de Sabran's love-sick heart or to give her that self-command which she sought from them. This country with its disturbing scents and warm smells its mysterious rustlings and the murmur of the wind in the tender foliage, enervated and intoxicated her. The peaceful Château d'Anizy and its surroundings disquieted and excited the young woman far more than the hubbub of the noisiest town. It was to this place of love and charm that Stanislas de Boufflers came in May, there to meet once more his dearly-loved Countess. During the four years in which he had loved her he had been alternately tortured and exasperated by the young widow's virtue. One day in despair of ever subjugating it he wrote

The jealous are bound to declare
Gainst her brain they have nothing to say
And tis only perhaps in her hair
One perceives there's a slight disarray
In Cupid a new trick we find
To revenge his rejected addresses
Having failed to disorder your mind
He works havoc Sabran 'mong your tresses."¹

¹ *Sur la raison les envieux
N'en jamais pu trouver à mordre
Et ce n'est que dans ses cheveux
Qu'on aperçoit quelque discordre
De l'amour c'est un trait nouveau
Sabran il venge son injure
Il n'a pu troubler son cerveau
Il s'en prend à la chevelure*

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But to-day the seductive treachery of the country, the intoxication of the spring, the uselessness of the struggle, the intensity of a passion which for four long years she had at once fought and indulged, bewildered and confused the heart and brain of this woman who adored her Chevalier In this month of May, so blooming, so pulsating with life, Eléonore yielded to Stanislas de Boufflers' love and in one burst of passion changed the whole of her life

The gift of herself which the Comtesse de Sabran had just bestowed on the man who had made himself master of her soul was totally unlike the more or less passing caprices of her contemporaries This virtuous woman, whose love had been so strong and so imperious as to wrest from her what she regarded as the greatest of all sacrifices, that of her chastity, henceforth made it the pivot round which her life revolved. We see her radiant or distraught, according as her love was happy or unhappy. It was the source of her joys and of her profound sorrows She remained indeed the same loving, tender and devoted mother that she had ever been since the birth of her children, but however strong her maternal love might be, it was dominated by her passion for Boufflers Henceforward Eléonore de Sabran belongs to the heroic phalanx of the great lovers who live by and die for their love.

Thus, when she was with the Chevalier, she lost sight of everything but her love for him "I love you as they used to love once upon a time, as they love no longer, and as they will never love again",¹ she wrote to him She felt that she had never lived till she loved him "How right I was to give myself to you, body

¹ Quoted from *The Chevalier de Boufflers* by Nesta H Webster.

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and soul! And Boufflers replied to these passionate transports with equal fervour. He the former seducer, the sceptic in love brought to his passion for Madame de Sabran all the purity of sentiment and ecstasy of a youthful lover. He felt with an intensity unsuspected even by himself the fascination of this unique woman whom a few years previously he had described in these words. Picture to yourself not only the most striking woman you have ever seen but what is far greater the most fascinating not so much beauty as a soul made visible. Of her body he wrote 'This almost ethereal body in which Nature has made use of matter only to give grace a form and to embody a soul.'

It was just because Eléonore de Sabran was almost all soul because only that which was exalted and great had part in her, that she suffered through her love. Passionately in love with her as the Chevalier was there was his past to be reckoned with and on more than one occasion he relapsed into habits which Madame de Sabran's sense of refinement forbade her to accept without suffering. Eléonore experienced this in the summer of 1783 only two years after that spring at Anizi which had witnessed the birth of their love. The Chevalier was obliged to go to Brussels and asked the Countess to meet him at Valenciennes. The young woman set out to rejoin her lover her heart leaping with joy. On the way there she was already living that delicious moment when they met again and was rehearsing all the expressions of glowing affection with which she would greet her beloved. But on her arrival at Valenciennes, Madame de Sabran discovered the Chevalier making love to a woman of the town. The

lady in question was neither pretty nor distinguished. Thus Eléonore had the double humiliation and the double chagrin of being forgotten, if only for a moment, and this, for a woman totally devoid of charm or attractions. But there is no doubt that Madame de Sabran, in spite of bitter tears shed at the time, and in spite of her anger and despair, forgave the Chevalier very shortly afterwards. 'A woman who loves as she loved is capable of making every sacrifice to keep the object of her passion,' but her love was wounded and the wound was to become more painful, more aching with every fresh lapse on the part of her lover or during his absence, for the young woman's trust in him was shaken.

How tortured and frightened she must have been when the Chevalier de Boufflers announced that he was leaving to take up the governorship of Senegal! Doubtless it was one of the best means of serving his country and of gaining, perhaps, that fame and fortune without which he found it impossible to marry Madame de Sabran. His departure would also simplify Madame de Sabran's position in relation to her daughter Delphine, who was about to finish her education and to return from the convent. But these considerations, however potent, could not prevent the woman who had so profound a love for the Chevalier from looking upon his departure as the worst of misfortunes. 'Boufflers wrote to her from Rochefort that their separation seemed like a bottomless abyss, from on board the ship which bore him away he sent her a lock of his hair, a symbol of the tender bond between them, but when he reached Africa he allowed six months to pass before he wrote to her! How the fond

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mistress must have suffered! What must she have thought of her lover's silence? The Valenciennes episode the vicissitudes of his past must often have haunted her mind and filled her with despair. She who by reason of her virtue had kept her freedom for so many years now paid in acute grief for her weakness for the Chevalier. And yet she loved him so ardently that she was happy in having yielded to him.

What joy therefore was Eléonore's, when she learned that the Chevalier was on his way back to spend some months in France! Her emotion was so great that she could neither sleep nor eat in the days before his arrival. He came at last! And she knew that he loved her as much as ever. For six months her happiness increased and deepened in the presence or vicinity of the Chevalier. But he departed once more and her grief became so great that her old friend, the Duc de Nivernais found it necessary to invite her without delay to Saint Ouen in order to provide her with distractions or she would have been utterly crushed under its weight.

Divers troubles which were superadded intensified her sorrow. The Chevalier had hardly left France on the return voyage to Senegal when Madame de Sabran discovered in her own house the blackest of intrigues. The ecclesiastical tutor the Abbé Bernard to whom she had entrusted the education of her only son Elzéar de Sabran and the completion of Delphine's education had not only betrayed the confidence reposed in him by inciting the children against their mother but he had even formed a diabolical plot to poison the young man in order that he the Abbé might the sooner enjoy the pension which Madame de Sabran

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went and whispered into his son's. Never in my life before did I feel so embarrassed. I don't believe my blushes will have died down by to-morrow !'

But terrible troubles of a sort other than the difficulties of Delphine's marriage were soon to cast a gloom over Madame de Sabran's life and that of her lover who returned to France in 1787. The old French society and the Royal House which had created it, crumbled. This society whose history had been inextricably woven with that of its kings ever since Louis XI had founded a homogeneous and consolidated France was diseased by reason of past successes and the abuses in which it had indulged. The benefits which the nobility and clergy had gained had made of them two privileged classes which oppressed a third. But the weight of the burden did not make itself felt until the privileged classes concerned themselves less and less with the unprivileged and lived their life more and more apart. The movement which began under Louis XIV arose out of the extended powers which that monarch gave to the Court, thereby inviting the desertion of the country by the nobility and it was accentuated in the eighteenth century. Then numbers of *seigneurs* and rich people proved by their behaviour that their principal concern was enjoyment. The Regent and his *rôles* started wild orgies of pleasure and amusement, Louis XV's mistresses continued them. When the misery and distress became so aggravated that the country districts were more and more abandoned when France lost her colonies and by an insensate and unjustifiable expenditure advanced towards bankruptcy then the

¹ Quoted from *The Chocolatier de Boufflers* by Nesta H. Webster

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I see a smouldering mine But how
and where it will explode I tremble to think.
Frightful things will happen in France and in Paris

In spite of this she left Switzerland to return to
France in order to be with Boufflers

But the Revolution became more and more menacing
to the aristocrats The Abbé Bernard, who had been
pardoned plotted against Madame de Sabran He
informed against her and denounced her to the
vindictive populace Monseigneur de Sabran who
had decided to leave France urged his relative for
the sake of Elzéar's life alone to take similar steps
Madame de Sabran who every day became more alarmed
and more shocked by the revolutionary movement
and who worried over the dangers to which Elzéar
was exposed in Paris yielded to Monseigneur de
Sabran's advice and in May 1791 she tore herself
away from Boufflers and from Delphine who wished
to remain in Paris and accompanied by her son took
the road to Prussia. From Coblenz she wrote to the
Chevalier My eyes turn ever in the direction of my
unhappy country and to you, dear heart Since I
have left you I only live in the past

Madame de Sabran was not to be linked with the
present again until the month of December of the same
year At that precise moment Boufflers who had
also been molested in France disheartened by the
outrages of the reformers incapable of coping with their
excesses turned to her who occupied the chief place
in his heart It was at Rheinburg that they met
The Chevalier wrote to Eléonore that he wanted her
to become his second self making all worries bearable
and all pleasures delightful And yet it was not until

five years later that they became husband and wife For Madame de Sabran these five years were saddened by the most crushing troubles. Her dearly-loved son-in-law, whom she alone had appreciated as he deserved, perished on the scaffold in January, 1794, at the age of twenty-six Delphine, accused of plotting and treason, was arrested on the 20th of February, 1794, and endured captivity for eight months and eleven days, during which death hovered over her continually She only owed her life to the blind devotion of a simple stone-mason, Jérôme, who was subjugated by her wit and beauty during one of her examinations

It was after these terrible trials that Eléonore de Sabran attained the immense happiness for which her loving heart had yearned for the past sixteen years, for just as long as she had known the Chevalier On a shining morning in June in the year 1797, Boufflers, more than ever in love with his fascinating and *piquante* Countess of the thoughtful eyes and unruly locks, led Eléonore to the altar in a church at Breslau and made her the Marquise de Boufflers The Prince of Hohenlohe, Archbishop of Breslau, solemnized the union of the two lovers Boufflers had now inherited the title of Marquis, but had nothing to live on except the income derived from an agricultural college which he had established in Prussia All Madame de Sabran's property had been confiscated and it was because they were equally poor that Boufflers consented to marry her It needed but little to content them, for, however simple might be their life, it was beautified and bathed in sunshine by the power of their love

But from the year 1800, the material circumstances of the Marquis and Marquise de Boufflers

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Delphine de Custine interested the wife of the first Consul and Duroc Bonaparte's aide-de-camp, in their fate. At their combined request, Bonaparte allowed the Marquis and Marquise to return to France and granted the post of librarian to Boufflers. Thanks to the salary attached to this post the pair were henceforth raised above want and the former Chevalier was able to surround his beloved Marquise with a thousand comforts which restored her health now impaired by rheumatism and the worries of her past life. He took her to Plombières, where everyone was touched at the sight of the Marquis pushing with the utmost tenderness and care a wheel-chair in which the charming invalid reposed. Sometimes Boufflers would carry his wife in his arms to the top of the hills. Both of them would smile so lovingly at each other that it was impossible not to see how fresh and passionate was their love.

Thus in this delightful intimacy, in Paris and the various places where they repaired for the benefit of their health they passed long years, which to them seemed as short as months. But time whose flight they did not notice one day imperiously asserted his rights. Boufflers, infirm aged and shrunken was snatched from his dear Eléonore on the 18th of January, 1815.

The Marquise survived her beloved husband twelve years. Charming and amiable and in love to the end she felt when she passed away on the 27th of February, 1827 that she was going to rejoin him, to love him even more than she had done on earth.

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THE proud Duchesse de Châteauroux was dead,¹ and after her death, in circumstances of violence and mystery, everyone at the Court of Louis XV was asking who would replace her as favourite. Not for a single instant did anyone suppose that Louis could do without a recognized mistress. He was so dependent on amusement. It was so essential that someone should act for him, since the Queen had entirely disappeared from his life, excepting in times of sickness, that the question was not *would* he have a new favourite but *who* would she be.

All the courtiers were eager to find him one; each hoped to gain some special favour, not only from the King, but also from the favourite herself, if he should manage to settle the King's choice. So about Louis was spun a web of numerous, active and complicated intrigues, but none of them was successful in introducing the woman who should fill the Duchesse de Châteauroux's place.

It was from a world quite outside the Court, which had never been mixed up in Court intrigues, that the new favourite was to come. She was born on the 29th of December, 1721, had married on the 9th of March, 1741, and in 1745 she was the delight and ornament of the great financial world of Paris, the "tax-gatherers", as the people, animated by hatred and contempt, designated the financiers.

¹ See the chapter on *The Duchesse de Châteauroux*

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Madame Lenormand d'Etioles such was her name *née* Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, had one of the prettiest women in Paris Louise-Madeleine de la Motte for her mother. But Monsieur Poisson never appreciated his wife's beauty as it deserved. He was a vulgar man, with gross appetites and a passion for money. At one time equerry to the Duc d'Orléans he made himself conspicuous by his cupidity and dishonesty among army contractors all of whom however cheated and robbed him at will. He was even burned in effigy on account of his peculations. It was then that the seductive Madame Poisson consoled herself for her husband's indifference with the friendship of a farmer-general, Monsieur Lenormand de Tournehem. The enchanting little Jeanne-Antoinette was probably the fruit of their intimacy.

The child was scarcely more than a few months old before her mother was already scheming to make her the most fascinating of women. She had visions of her daughter reigning all-powerful in the heart of a king by virtue of her attractions and charm. So when the little girl grew older her whole education was designed to render her attractive both physically and mentally. Monsieur Lenormand de Tournehem lent himself with a boundless generosity to the mother's wishes and Jeanne-Antoinette had the best professors in Paris to develop her natural gifts. Jeliotto taught her music and singing, Guibaudet, dancing, Crébillon, elocution and skilled artists initiated her into the secrets of drawing, painting and engraving at the same time strengthening her natural taste for these arts. The passion to please was also inculcated and her teachers even strove to give to this passion the force



JEANNE ANTOINETTE POISSON

Wife of Monsieur Lenormand d'Etoiles Marquise de Pompadour
Born 1721 died 1764

Print by J. I. Auselin after Carl Vanloo's portrait

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intensity and permanence of a vital instinct. Thus it was that every day Mademoiselle Poisson became prettier, more graceful and more captivating. Better than anyone else she knew how to charm, to gain admiration and to make herself irresistible. Her mother had confided to her her ambitious dream and the young girl had smiled delightedly, sure already that she would be able to realize it.

It was with this end in view that, at the age of twenty, she consented to marry Monsieur Lenormand d'Etioles, nephew of Monsieur Lenormand de Tournehem, a financier like his uncle. This husband had the misfortune to be very ugly, small and afflicted with chronically damp hands. None the less, he possessed a title. This title was certainly recent and had been bought, nevertheless, it had power to ennoble Mademoiselle Poisson, who, had she remained merely a commoner, could never have aspired to enter Court. Monsieur Lenormand d'Etioles was, besides, madly in love with his young wife, whom he admired wholeheartedly. His love and admiration increased still further when Madame d'Etioles organized at her château receptions and fêtes as original as they were artistic and enjoyable. The whole "tax-gatherers'" world was as proud as it was pleased about the marriage. Never had it possessed so distinguished, witty, seductive and captivating a woman. Monsieur d'Etioles deemed himself the happiest of husbands, above all when his wife presented him with two girls, the first of whom, incidentally, survived only a very short time.

But if Monsieur d'Etioles had reached the height of his ambition, Madame d'Etioles regarded her present position only as a means of bringing herself into

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notice and of finally attracting the King's attention. She thought her own good luck had ordained that her husband's château should be situated at a very short distance from the forest of Sénart where Louis often came to hunt. She even hoped that this proximity would give her access to the King and help her to gain the place of favourite which her mother so ardently desired for her and which a fortune-teller, one Madame Lebon had predicted when she was a quite a child. So Madame d'Étioles kept an eye on the King's hunting expeditions at Sénart. One day when she was certain that the King would visit the forest she repaired there in her charming little phæton which she drove with as much grace and elegance as confidence. She had donned for the occasion a deliciously alluring pink costume which suited her to perfection. Seated in the light carriage she was like an adorable little elf full of mischief but infinitely attractive. Louis noticed her almost directly she arrived but just as he was about to draw near to have a closer view a quick dexterous jerk of the reins carried the phæton off in the opposite direction and the adorable elf disappeared in the density of the forest. Soon however, she reappeared but farther off. Louis felt an intense desire to overtake this charming vision. But the all powerful Duchesse de Châteauroux was with him and the graceful pink-clad elf displayed a marvellous activity and ingenuity in appearing disappearing approaching and retiring, in executing turns and evolutions which baffled all the King's conjectures. Decidedly Louis XV was not to make the acquaintance of the fairy of the forest that day. She was too capricious and too quick to give him any chance of catching up with her and the

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Duchesse de Châteauroux, as soon as she could, sent word to Madame d'Etioles to leave the forest immediately, for her presence was causing considerable disturbance to His Majesty Madame d'Etioles departed; but she attended the next Royal hunt, this time in blue. The Duchesse de Châteauroux, who was also present, felt an excessive annoyance and a sombre anger on recognizing the young woman, but she had not the right to dismiss her. After the hunt the King ordered all the game which had been killed to be taken to Etioles.

But Madame d'Etioles' progress was to be suddenly interrupted. With great difficulty the Duchesse de Châteauroux had prevailed on Louis to put himself at the head of his armies, and now the beautiful favourite shared in his military triumphs, while Madame d'Etioles, remaining at her husband's side, was asking herself when another favourable opportunity would recur to bring her to the King's notice.

This opportunity presented itself much sooner than the young woman had ever dreamed. The King, weary of exploits which had nearly cost him his life, speedily returned to Versailles to resume his easy, pleasure-loving existence, and some months later, on the 8th of December, 1744, Madame de Châteauroux was carried off by a cruel and rapid illness.¹

Madame d'Etioles realized that the moment for diligent action had arrived. She tried to take advantage of a big ball which was held at Versailles in honour of the Dauphin's marriage in the early part of 1745. But she passed almost unnoticed, so many were the wonderful sights to be seen there. One which attracted

¹ See the chapter on *The Duchesse de Châteauroux*.

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most attention consisted of a group of male and female dancers transformed into rhythmically swaying yew-trees. Disappointed, the ambitious young woman promised herself her revenge at the ball which the *Hôtel de Ville* at Paris was giving to the King and the Royal Family to celebrate the same event. Madame went to the ball in a charming pink domino and stayed near the entrance for the King's arrival.

But Louis kept the company waiting. He had at first decided not to go to the ball at the *Hôtel de Ville*, so the Royal Family departed for the *réveillon* without him. However towards eleven o'clock the King changed his mind. His coach was hastily brought round and he arrived late. Madame d'Étioles had not quitted her observation post though the King's arrival seemed but a forlorn hope. She had managed too to preserve her good humour and air of gaiety. Scarcely had Louis entered the *Hôtel de Ville* when, with coquettish grace she pirouetted round the Royal visitor and forced him to feel the charm of her delightful personality. The Monarch allowed himself to be drawn into the game. He followed the fascinating pink domino through the groups of dancers threading his way among a labyrinth of furniture and ornaments until he lost sight of her. Then being somewhat tired he was about to abandon the chase when the mischievous domino reappeared and threw a lace handkerchief at his feet. The significance of this pretty gesture was not lost on the Sovereign. He made haste to pick up the elegant handkerchief and under the protection of this dainty *gage d'amour* he was at last able to catch the tantalizing domino and even to squeeze her waist. The King led his charming captive to an isolated and

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restful little *salon*, for he burned to become better acquainted with the lady who had led him such a dance. But the domino was so overcome by his nearness that she fainted in his arms. Louis had to bring all his knowledge and presence of mind into play to restore her. When she regained consciousness, the King and the domino smiled at each other in the pleasantest manner possible. They were already in such sympathy with one another that the King was afraid to let the young woman return home alone. He accompanied her to her mother's, Madame Poisson, and enjoyed himself so much in the society of these ladies that it was long past dawn before he returned to Versailles and regained his apartments. It was after this night of emotion that the King slept until five o'clock in the afternoon, and the courtiers at Versailles remarked that on this particular Monday "the King's day began at five o'clock."

Nevertheless, Madame d'Etioles' success with the King would have stopped at this point if the young woman had not had a relative at Court to recall to Louis XV the charming memories of the forest of Sénart and the *Hôtel de Ville*, and to laud the varied, attractive and manifold gifts of the beautiful "tax-gatherer". In fact, however much Louis might be wanting a mistress, he was so apathetic, so devoid of initiative, that had it not been for his *valet de chambre*, Binet, he would never, perhaps, have followed up the adventure at the ball in the *Hôtel de Ville*. But Binet, with infinite adroitness was able to make the King see and even feel the delights which were reserved for the lover of this creature, all compact of charm and grace. Louis now began to think more often of

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Madame, d'Etioles his imagination pictured her roguish, light hearted, capricious and bewitching as he had seen her at Sénart and at the *Hôtel de Ville*. It was not long before he wanted to see her again, and as chance took a hand in the game, he had no difficulty in realizing his wish. His Minister d'Argenson lived in the Rue des Bons Enfants, almost opposite Madame de Poisson's house. So in order to visit the mother and daughter the King had only to call at his Minister's, and from there but to cross the street to find himself in the presence of the object of his growing love.

Thus Louis paid Madame d'Etioles several visits, and the Duc de Richelieu says in his *Mémoires* that it was probably towards the end of the month of March (1745) that the young woman gratified the King's desire. Their relations remained secret and limited for some weeks. But Madame d'Etioles did not intend this state of things to continue for long. She meant to appear at Court at the very earliest opportunity but since the King apparently failed to discern this his pretty mistress determined to precipitate the event herself.

Louis had not been to the Rue des Bons Enfants for several days. This prolonged absence might signify the beginning of indifference. Madame d'Etioles resolved to retaliate at once. She set out immediately for Versailles and arrived there alarmed and in tears. She came ostensibly, to implore the King's help and protection. Her husband had learned of her sentiments for and bounties to Louis and intended to punish her cruelly. She was terrified. Never would she dare to return to Monsieur d'Etioles. The King alone could save her from the terrible anger of this man.

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Her expressions of distress and fear were accompanied by eloquent and touching tears. She was almost tragic in her fright and yet truly charming! How was it possible for the King to refuse her request? He had no wish to do so, and the same evening Madame d'Etioles supped at Versailles between the Duc de Richelieu and the Duc de Luxembourg. The next day she was installed in Madame de Mailly's apartments (April, 1745).

As a matter of fact, Monsieur d'Etioles had not threatened his wife at all. This husband, who had always been a slave to the slightest wish and caprice of the woman to whom he had given his name, who would have dared anything to make her happy, had spoken in terms of love and respect and not in the least angrily or spitefully. But Madame d'Etioles, who had never regarded him in any other light than as a means to gain access to the King, made use of him yet once again to further her ambition, without troubling about the rôle which she assigned to him. It was for the purpose of getting rid of him altogether that she persuaded Louis one day to confer on Monsieur d'Etioles the appointment of Postmaster-General, intimidation and threats of the Bastille having failed to accomplish her object. A legal separation in June, 1745, completely severed her financial interests from those of her husband.

The young woman now established herself more and more firmly at Court. Louis XV associated his mistress in the country's glory by conferring on her from the headquarters of his armies the title of Marquise the day after the great victory of Fontenoy (the 11th of May, 1745). Henceforth she was to be known as the Marquise de Pompadour, the name of a hamlet and of a

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magnificent château situated not far from the banks of the Corrèze, which she received from the King at the same time as her title. On the 14th of September 1745, the Princesse de Conti herself formally presented at Versailles the already recognized favourite who was one day to become *dame du palais* to the Queen and who became almost immediately the soul life and power of Louis XV's government as well as of his intimate life and affections.

The attitude of the new favourite which at first was very modest almost self-effacing and full of deference towards the Queen was in marked contrast to her radiant beauty. Her beautiful complexion which was at once brilliant and delicate she owed to the incredible whiteness of her skin and the exquisitely delicate colour in her cheeks. Her lips were rather pale, but the teeth which they hid were so ravishing and could flash so delightfully that no one thought of wishing that her lips had been redder. Madame de Pompadour's smile lit up and embellished her whole face pretty as it already was for it made the most adorable and disconcerting little dimples in her tiny cheeks. Her eyes which were absolutely irresistible, are indescribable sometimes they would seem to be black and sometimes blue. The only thing about which one could be certain was that they possessed all the qualities of both blue and black eyes and that they bewitched those upon whom their glances fell. She had magnificent light auburn hair, which had borrowed the warmth and radiance of the setting sun. Her face was extraordinarily mobile full of roguish charm and sometimes of nobility. She could be impious too. Her height a little above medium was exactly suited

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to this graceful, lissom, fascinating woman, in whom everything was justly proportioned, harmonious, and even poetical. Her hands, arms and feet were perfect and her whole body, sprightly and enchanting, seemed to be controlled by the love which animated it

As a matter of fact, Madame de Pompadour was passionless or, rather, her sole passion was a devouring ambition to whose service she had brought an indomitable tenacity of will. Love did not move her; it wearied and bored her. It was riches, glory, honours that she craved and, above all, power, which she prized even more than wealth. It was in order to obtain these things of sovereign worth that she had determined to make a conquest of Louis XV. She succeeded, thanks to her beauty and intellectual qualities. Exceedingly intelligent, highly cultivated, thoughtful and calculating, the new favourite had been able to provide for all eventualities, to arrange and accomplish everything. She had been troubled by no scruples or feelings; for to these she was a stranger. People and opportunities she regarded merely as stepping stones in her climb upwards.

To-day Madame de Pompadour had attained that position which her mother had desired for her from the day of her birth, and which she herself had coveted ever since she had first begun to think. It might be supposed that in this hour of brilliant victory she would have been happy, in reality, she was confronted by terrible difficulties.

Louis had believed in the young woman's love for him. He had looked forward to so many unexpected joys, bringing voluptuous delight and fresh pleasures. On more than one occasion, before she was Marquise,

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he had found her less ardent than he had imagined awkward in love and maladroit in the manifestations of her passion but he had put this down to the false position which she occupied. He thought that once she was formally installed at the Court and no longer worried over her family and position, she would be all that he had dreamed. But Madame de Pompadour hopelessly cold, entirely lacking in temperament whose senses were only stirred by the force of her will failed to create the illusion of love which he had anticipated She longed to be in love with him, at times she even thought that she was in love with him for in spite of everything she had some heart and a kindly imagination but she did not succeed in deceiving the King Soon Louis christened her "the statue of snow and when he entered her apartments he did not always take the trouble to approach her He often went straight to the sofa where he sat down alone for he no longer desired kisses from a woman who was unable to create the illusion of love

Madame de Pompadour at once gauged the danger of the situation she knew that the courtiers were already talking about it and she shuddered at the thought that in a few hours she could lose everything which it had taken her several years to gain, and which had cost her so much effort Come what might she must strengthen her position Feverishly she racked her brains for the best means of retaining the King's favour This was the time when her woman of the bedchamber Madame du Hausset, describes her as trembling at the least sound always on the *qui vive* spending hours before her glass in the creation of a *coiffure* or a *toilette* thanks to which she might be

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secure on her throne for another twenty-four hours But all these means were only transitory. She really desired to overcome the apathy of her senses and to show the King that she felt passion for him. So she resorted to a particularly stimulating diet. She fed on chocolate, highly peppered meats stuffed with truffles, cakes and milk-puddings strongly flavoured with vanilla She chose celery as her favourite vegetable and made her physician give her the names of all the drugs likely to be effective in such a case She took quantities of these, but in vain. She only caused pimples to appear on her nose and spoilt her skin and complexion

Then, prompted by her intelligence and common-sense, she realized that she must go to work quite differently if she wished to succeed in making herself indispensable to the King She endeavoured to distract and amuse her Royal lover, to give to this bored and blasé monarch, who was more prone to yawn than to laugh or even to speak, some sort of zest for life No sooner had she conceived this idea than she took possession of his days, bore him off from one entertainment to another, from château to château, and dragged him into a regular whirl of gaiety, until he was completely dazed She employed a thousand wily, ingenious little arts to prevent him from suffering boredom Her fertile imagination created daily new pleasures or transformed those which the King had already tasted

First it was concerts which she organized in the apartments assigned to her by the King These concerts were totally unlike any which Louis had hitherto attended. Madame de Pompadour, who was

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an excellent musician knew how to draw up a programme which was as original as it was pleasing. Then, music being too much like herself she decided to substitute for it theatrical performances. For this purpose she caused the most fascinating and costly theatre to be constructed in the *petits appartements*¹ at Versailles, where the actors and actresses were the ladies and gentlemen of the Court. The favourite herself coached them and the success which she achieved as head of the company and as an actress was enormous. Madame de Pompadour had a *flair* for the stage for dramatic art for the picturesque and for perspective. She knew exactly how to amuse how to draw tears to excite enthusiasm or hate. So the *petits appartements* which had formerly resounded to the witty and daring jests of the Duchesse de Lauraguais² re-echoed to-day to the pretty silvery toned and softly modulated voice of the Marquise de Pompadour as she acted almost with genius the heroines in fashionable plays.

Versailles was not the King's only private theatre. The favourite had others equally choice at Choisy where the performances in the *cabinets* were really inaugurated and at Bellevue. The most popular plays of the period were acted here with greater skill than on the public stage. Thus it was that Madame de Pompadour acted in and caused to be presented at the various theatres in the King's *petits appartements* *L'Enfant Prodigue* by Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Le Dain du Village* by the same author, *Le Méchant* by Gresset and a number of other plays which are unknown to-day but were very popular then. Her mother's old friend

¹ See the chapter on *The Duchesse de Châteauroux*

² See the chapter on *The Duchesse de Châteauroux*

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Monsieur Lenormand de Tournehem, was manager of these theatres and no one admired more than he the talent of the actress-favourite. As to Madame Poisson, she died the year following her daughter's installation at the Court. After her death an unknown hand dared to write this epitaph.

“Here lies one, who, gutter-bred,
To a fortune did aspire,
Sold herself to the ‘farmer’s’ bed
And her daughter to the squire!”¹

But Madame de Pompadour had no time to mourn her mother's loss. No sooner had the Royal theatres been built, no sooner had she organized and trained her company, and put on and performed the plays in public, than she perceived Louis' interest to be waning. If she failed to discover something which would renew the attraction of these theatrical performances, the King would grow tired of them. So Madame de Pompadour had the bright idea of giving the Monarch an active rôle. The play was always followed by supper in the *petits appartements*. The favourite persuaded the King to make the supper invitations his own particular concern, while the performance was going on. Naturally all the Court ladies and the courtiers wanted to be present at these suppers. But, apart from the restricted space, the Marquise was afraid of the young and pretty women and taxed all her wits to find means to keep them away from the King. So after the first supper she reserved to herself the right of issuing invitations to the women. But it was by the invitations to the men that she meant to amuse the

¹ “*Ci-gît qui, sortant du fumier
Pour faire une fortune entière,
Vendit son honneur au fermier
Et sa fille au propriétaire*”

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King during the performances. Consequently she made it a rule that henceforth none of the men should be invited to supper until the evening itself. When the play began all the ladies seated themselves on a bench to the right of the King while the gentlemen sat on a bench on his left. Simultaneously a footman handed the King a powerful magnifying glass which enabled him to distinguish everything down to the very expression on the faces. Through this magnifying glass the King leisurely studied each of his guests in turn. From time to time he put down the glass to write a name then the scrutiny began again. In this manner Louis drew up the list of gentlemen who were to receive invitations to supper. No one knew the names which the King had written down. These were not announced until the end of the play. Great therefore was the suspense which prevailed each feverishly desiring to be among the chosen and trembling lest he should be passed over. The spectacle of the fears and desires of the acute feelings which agitated the minds and souls of the gentlemen assembled was a source of ever fresh and lively pleasure to Louis. No play ever amused him half so much as this entertainment which he owed to Madame de Pompadour's ingenuity. At the end of the performance all the spectators were summoned by the gentleman usher into the ante-room to the *cabins*. It was here that the contents of the King's list were announced. By the light of a candle stuck in an enormous candlestick the usher read out one by one the names which the King had written down. Each name was followed by a pause as the fortunate nominee saw the door which gave access to the dining room where supper was

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served open immediately to admit him Not until he had entered and the door was closed behind him did the reading of the Royal list continue in the midst of growing agitation, an intense pallor overspreading the faces of many as the reading advanced Not infrequently those courtiers who had learned for certain that their names were omitted from the King's list would remain as though crushed and speechless, incapable for several minutes of leaving the ante-room

It was after one of these *cabinets* suppers to which the King, the favourite and the Court attached so much importance, that Madame de Pompadour procured the dismissal (August the 6th, 1755) of Madame d'Estrade, one of the women who was most skilled in intrigue During the supper of the night before, Madame de Pompadour had observed that Louis lingered to talk to the lady and that he had smiled at her in a way that the favourite considered dangerous to herself So the next day Madame d'Estrade, to her great astonishment, received a letter from the King in which he enjoined her to leave the Court immediately

If Madame de Pompadour had gained such an ascendancy over Louis' will it was, no doubt, in the beginning, because she amused, distracted and took him out of himself, but it was also due to the fact that this woman, possessed of immense intelligence, ambition, energy, audacity, will-power and skill, combined with every kind of intellectual resource, had been able to monopolize all the forces of the government and the Court of Louis XV and to control the entire machinery of the State From 1746, until the day of her death, she was the despotic Minister of this Monarch who was always so apathetic and indifferent where politics

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were concerned. As Minister and favourite in one Madame de Pompadour displayed a spirit of authority which was only equalled by her pride and extravagance. She whom Frederick II of Prussia disrespectfully called "Cotillon IV" became insolent on her accession to power

It was the home government which was the first to suffer from Madame de Pompadour's claims and exactations. Her earliest act of authority was to replace Orry the economical Minister of Finance by Monsieur de Machault a pleasant but frivolous man who was very little concerned with safeguarding the State revenues¹. Then less tolerant than the Duchesse de Châteauroux the Marquise de Pompadour disgraced and sent into exile at Bourges in the spring of 1749 Maturpas who had been guilty of writing an epigram against her. This revenge not only consoled her for the harm wrought by the epigram in question but also for the numerous pin pricks levelled against her by the latest lampoons whose numbers could have filled volumes. It was during this same spring of 1749 (the 1st of May) that the youthful Daury was confined in the Bastille he whose misfortunes were to become so popular when he revealed his identity under the name of Latude to which he had in fact no right. Daury was imprisoned because he had been accused, falsely, of having tried with the help of his friends to poison the favourite. His imprisonment lasted for no less a period than thirty six years. The Marquise indeed had too much to do to remember those of whom she had rid herself.

¹ She threw him over after the taxation of the *ringdimes* had made the Minister unpopular both with the Parliament and the nation.

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It was her numerous occupations, perhaps, which may help to explain why Madame de Pompadour never promoted, with the single exception of Choiseul, any but men of mediocre talents. Her time was so filled with a variety of pursuits and engagements that notwithstanding her intelligence she could only study very superficially those around her. This difficulty, joined to her boast that in each of the men she employed she had at once a perfect courtier and a zealous admirer, enables us to understand why none of them was at the head of his profession. There were the incapable Marquis de Puisieux, substituted for d'Argenson, Bernis, the inefficient Minister of Foreign Affairs, Soubise, who was placed at the head of the French armies by Madame de Pompadour and who showed himself so incompetent as to appear grotesque. The day following his most cruel defeat (at Rossbach in 1757) all Paris was singing

“ ‘The deuce,’ cried Soubise, with his lantern alight,
‘ My army has quite disappeared in the night !
Sure, someone has filch’d it, ‘twas here yesterday,
Have I lost it ? Mislaid ? Or myself gone astray ? ’ ”¹

Madame de Pompadour was herself convinced of Soubise’s incapacity and caused him to be replaced by the Duc de Richelieu

Monsieur Poisson, her legal father, was made Seigneur de Marigny, her brother Marquis de Vaudières and afterwards Marquis de Marigny and director of the Royal building operations. It is but fair to say that in the last-named function Poisson *fils* showed himself

¹ “ *Soubise dit, la lanterne à la main*
‘ *J’ai beau chercher, ou diable est mon armée ?*
Elle était la pourtant hier matin
Me l’a-t-on prise, ou l’aurais-je égarée ? ’ ”

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an enlightened and intelligent patron of all the arts Madame de Pompadour also interfered in the struggle between the Parliament and the Archbishop of Paris and the Jesuits Her hatred of the Jesuits who had employed a thousand means to expel her from the Court, naturally made her range herself on the side of Parliament.

Nevertheless, despite her incredible energy, her ever active intelligence and her feverish efforts, which were concentrated at one and the same time on the King's pleasures and on his government, the Marquise de Pompadour had not succeeded in definitely establishing her domination either over the Court or over Louis In 1753 the favourite passed through a terrible crisis The Court looked upon her then and for several years afterwards as a *parvenu* Voltaire himself who by birth belonged just as little to the Court, wrote in 1755 in his *Pucelle*

This gay grisette a lofty rôle would fill
Formed as she was by Nature and by Art
In the harem or play to act a part
Whom shrewd mamma with foresight wit and skill
To lordly couch of Farmer did convey
And Cupid with a hand more cunning still
Between a monarch's sheets contrived to lay¹

The King became estranged from her for she had lost her attraction for him and could no longer be his mistress All that remained of her sprightly, bewitching beauty were her wonderful, disturbing eyes Her freshness had entirely vanished She was thin

¹ *Telle piedgi cette heureuse grisette
Que la Nature ainsi que l'Art forma
Pour le plaisir et bien pour l'Opéra
Qu'une maman astute et discrète
Au noble lit d'un fermier fléa
Et que l'Amour d'une main plus adroite
Pour un monarque entre deux draps fléa!*

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hectic and had a cough ; the doctors urged her to take the greatest care of her chest Madame de Pompadour paid no heed to medical advice , but her will, strong as it was, could not restore her health. There was nothing in her which recalled the poetical and mischievous little elf of the forest of Sénart. In October, 1752, Louis XV had conferred on her by letters patent the title of Duchess As an *adieu* it was glorious and Louis certainly meant it to be a farewell gift The Marquise fought. She refused to understand She would find other means to hold the King. While she sought them she lived in a perpetual state of terror. Thrown into a cold sweat by the discovery of a letter in Louis' pocket, by a word the Monarch might address to a woman, even by a look , ill, tormented by the fever of fear as well as of sickness, she was haunted day and night by that rival's shadow which she believed to be hovering over her. So acute were her fears and sufferings that she ended by wanting to give up the game She indulged in religious vagaries and attempted to become reconciled to Rome and her husband She even hoped for the Pope's intervention to influence Monsieur d'Etioles on his wife's behalf. But neither Rome nor Monsieur d'Etioles would respond to her overtures. Her husband had been too profoundly and sadly deceived by the woman whom he had imagined to be so different from what she had shown herself, to believe either in her repentance or in the sincerity of any of her sentiments Rome suspected that the manœuvres of this enemy might conceal a snare Thus Madame de Pompadour was repulsed by those whose help she implored and had to face her terrible situation alone. It was her isolation and

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peril which determined her to commit one of her compromising acts, the importance of which has been the most exaggerated of any and which has brought on her the most discredit

This woman, whose ambition had always been the great motive power in her life who had never had the unsophisticated mind of a young girl nor known the hesitations of refined and delicate natures who always judged her actions by the criterion of success and who had no precise idea of morality and virtue, ended by desiring to keep her position as favourite by leaving others to look after the King's voluptuous pleasures. The one thing which she wished to prevent at all costs was the exercise of any influence over Louis by those who charmed his senses She knew for example that it was not the jealousy of love that she had felt when Lonis was paying attention to the Marquise de Coislin She was well aware that it was not the lover's joy on regaining her loved one which she expressed when she observed to her faithful du Hausset after the check to Madame de Coislin 'The proud Marquise has missed her mark! She has terrified the King by her grand airs and has never ceased to ask him for money The King would sign for a million without thinking anything of it and yet he would hardly spend twenty *louis* on his little treasure!' Madame de Pompadour was feeling the fear of losing her power, the one thing which she passionately loved So she was ready to countenance the King's amorous fancies on condition that they left her power intact It was certain that all the Court ladies whom the King might honour would make exactions incompatible with the claims of Madame de Pompadour This being so

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which in the past had been reserved for deer that the *Petite Maison du Roi*, called the *Parc aux Cerfs* on account of its former use, was put in order. Although Châteaubriand has called the *Parc aux Cerfs* the pillow of Louis XV's debaucheries, although historians like Henri Martin have stressed the gravity of the licence which the King allowed himself, and Lacretelle has claimed that these debauches cost four millions, it is very certain that the importance of the *Parc aux Cerfs* has been greatly exaggerated. In a word, the number of young girls who passed through it was very limited. There were never more than three at a time, more often only two and still more often only one. As to births, they were exceedingly rare.

The King was known there as a Polish count, distantly related to Queen Marie Leczinska. The organization was certainly in the hands of Madame de Pompadour in spite of the denials of some of her biographers and one of her cousins, the Marquis de Luzarche, was at the head. Undoubtedly Lebel, a former valet, was charged with the duty of finding subjects who would please the King but it is very certain that the final decision lay with Madame de Pompadour. The *dame Bertrand* at one time Lebel's housekeeper was lady-superintendent at the *Parc aux Cerfs*. Each of the young persons who were installed there had her own personnel, her *maison* as it was called and a regular allowance set aside for her maintenance. This establishment consisted of three domestics and the allowance amounted to two thousand francs per head. These young girls had a *loge grille* at the Comédie where they went in turn. None of them knew that there were others. Besides

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herself in the house. They were not allowed to receive friends, but they were supplied with the masters whom they wanted to complete their education. There is every reason to believe that occasionally they were recruited by abduction. Nevertheless, among these victims to Royal caprice there seem to have been more than one who was madly in love with the visitor at the *Parc aux Cerfs*. It is related that after *Damiens*' attempt on the King's life (January the 5th, 1757), one of them clung tenaciously to Louis on his return, exclaiming: "Do not leave me, dear Sire; I thought I should have gone mad from grief when they tried to kill you!" But it would not have done for the mystery of the King's incognito to be solved. And as the unfortunate girl persisted in asserting that she was sure it was the King who had come to see her, she was pronounced to be mad and sent away to a *lunatic asylum*.

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which, with the consent of Janelle, Postmaster-General she had made a regular and permanent business was also a source of inexhaustible amusement to Louis. It was due to her that the King was *au courant* with all the gossip in the land love adventures and schemes of the most improper order, which provided him with every sort and kind of entertainment while Madame de Pompadour derived hints from this information which were of great value to her in the exercise of power.

These measures as well as the suspicions roused by the *Parc aux Cerfs* and the discontent bred by the expenditure and despotic power of the favourite provoked a riot in May 1756 and Damiens attempt on the King's life (January the 5th, 1757). The riot was sufficiently serious to terrify the King and Madame de Pompadour. Indeed although it was very quickly suppressed it left the pair so nervous that never again did the King and his favourite dare to cross Paris on their way from Versailles to St Denis. A Royal mandate decreed the immediate construction of a road by which they would avoid Paris when they went down to St Denis. This road received the name of *Route de la Révolte* by which it is still known to-day.

Damiens attack alarmed Louis even more than did the riot of May. This time the King believed that he had positively made up his mind to sacrifice the favourite in order to protect his own life. Machault although he owed his elevation to the Marquise and was looked upon as her devoted slave went to her and brutally intimated that she was to depart forthwith. Simultaneously her ante rooms were deserted. Madame de Pompadour was on the point of obeying

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the order brought by Machault. She thought the game was really lost this time. After wearing out her beauty and employing the best part of her mental gifts, her energy, her skill and inventive genius to keep her power; after providing the most unexpected pleasures, she was now struck by a blow which she saw no means of counteracting. But before she had made the necessary arrangements for her final departure the Maréchale de Mirepoix, a shrewd, gay diplomatist, who could judge the affair all the better since she was not mixed up in it, came to the Marquise and said "He who leaves the game, loses it." Seeing Madame de Pompadour reflect, the wise Maréchale added "The King's friendship for you is the same as his feeling for your *appartement* and your *entourage*, you are used to his ways, to his stories, he is at his ease with you and has no fear of being a bore. Do you suppose that he will have the courage to uproot all this in a day, to form another establishment, and to make himself conspicuous in the public eye by so great a change in his decorations?" Madame de Mirepoix was right. Louis XV was too apathetic not to be a man of habit. The favourite realized this and only made preparations for a temporary absence. So she disappeared for a few days, but Louis had hardly recovered his nerve when he insistently besought her to return. Madame de Pompadour came back more powerful than ever and Machault was dismissed.

Now that the Marquise had a new proof of her indispensability to the King, she was able to resume her rôle of favourite and Minister in one, with more assurance and authority than ever. She had never cared for Frederick II of Prussia, France's ally in 1740

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Notwithstanding the secret advances which he made to the favourite, he had indulged and continued to indulge in violent attacks on her and to make wounding jests at her expense. Maria Theresa of Austria on the contrary, despite her austere and strict conduct showed nothing but friendship and esteem for Madame de Pompadour. Some historians have gone so far as to claim that she addressed her as cousin. Doubtless this is far from being proved but nevertheless it is indisputable that the Austrian Queen sent the favourite a present of a magnificent *escritoire* in black lacquer, ornamented with her own miniature and worth seventy seven thousand francs. This miniature was surrounded with diamonds of the first water and the most friendly letter accompanied the gift. Never had the former 'tax-gatherer' dreamed of such an honour. The *partenue* of yesterday was treated as a friend by an Empress. This was probably one of the keenest joys of her life. It is also almost certain that to Maria Theresa's attitude towards la Pompadour must be attributed the 'reversal of alliances'. It was in fact to Madame de Pompadour that first Kaunitz and then Starhemberg addressed themselves in order to attain their ends. This reversal, which began at the conference of Babiole was confirmed by the Treaty of Versailles (May the 1st 1756) and definitely ratified after the last triumph of the Marquise at the Court in the opening hostilities of that disastrous struggle which has been called the Seven Years' War. France now ranged herself against her former ally and sought for no reason whatever on the side of her enemy of yesterday. It only needed the subtle diplomacy of the Empress Maria Theresa and the political ard



ETIENNE FRANCOIS DUC DE CHOISEUL

Great Statesman, 1719-1785 Inspired the "Family Compact, 1761

Print by Etienne Fesard after Louis Michel Vanloo's portrait

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feminine pride of Madame de Pompadour to rush the country into the maddest, most ill-considered and most unfortunate of wars. Her armies, badly recruited and badly commanded, suffered one disaster after another. The great defeat at Rossbach (November the 5th, 1757), was followed by those of Crefeld (1758) and Fellinghausen (1761). Even the "Family Compact", which was concluded in 1761 by Choiseul, who had become Minister of Foreign Affairs and Madame de Pompadour's protégé ever since 1748, when they had both united to prevent a Choiseul-Romanet, the Minister's niece, from capturing Louis' affections, could not prevent this war from being a veritable catastrophe for France. It cost the country a million in men, two and a half milliards of francs and the ruinous Treaty of Paris (1763), which deprived France of the Indies, Canada, several islands in the Antilles and Senegal in Africa. All these possessions passed to England, while France ceded Louisiana to Spain, who had been her ally during the last years of the war.

This unlucky foreign policy of Madame de Pompadour had only one compensation, to wit, the enlightened, continuous and beneficent patronage which the favourite bestowed on literature and the arts. Her keen and alert intelligence, backed by a taste as refined as it was unerring, by a genuine, ardent and natural love of beauty, made Louis' *inamorata* the inspirer of the art of her epoch. It owed to her its style. She has left behind a distinct type of architecture, painting and furniture, the characteristic of which is prettiness. This woman who had been so daintily and artistically pretty herself, spread about her her own sense of and

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taste for prettiness. The aim of those whom she inspired was to produce what was 'pretty', as witness the paintings of Bouchardon. She gave her special patronage to Carl Vanloo, Bouchardon and the architects Soufflot and Gabriel. She had a horror of commonplace elegance and of shoddy magnificence. She was particularly fond of Boulle's beautiful works of art of magots, pagodas finely carved ivory, rich bindings, delicate china, artistic bronzes and rare engravings. She herself produced works of a high order. After obtaining permission from Louis to build factories for the manufacture of china in Sévres and Vincennes she painted with loving care several services of this delightful china. She cut precious stones and made engravings from pictures of old masters, composed delightful songs of which one ("To the wood we will no longer go . . .") is still sung by young French girls. Yet Madame de Pompadour's artistic influence made itself considerably more felt in Louis XVI's reign than in Louis XV's, so much so that the actual Pompadour style is not that which bears her name but really the style which is called 'Louis XVI'.

Madame de Pompadour also gave her patronage to men of letters, poets and philosophers. She held a Court where they foregathered, but while all vied with one another as to who should praise her most and Voltaire dedicated his *Tancrède* to her, Jean Jacques Rousseau persisted in sulking. He sent her back the amount that he considered she had paid in excess for the music which he had written for her and never gave her a word of praise. But Montesquieu whose *L'Esprit des Léis*

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she had defended, was one of her friends. She patronized the Encyclopædists, even lodging Quesnay in her own apartments although, so it has been claimed, she did not understand the *Encyclopédie* and only acted thus from aversion to the priests. It is difficult to accept this view, however general it may be, for a woman of Madame de Pompadour's intelligence and discretion would do nothing with her eyes shut.

To Madame de Pompadour France also owes her *Ecole Militaire*, which was founded in 1756.

Unfortunately, the favourite, who was greedy and extravagant, spent enormous sums of money to achieve what she did. Thanks to the *acquits au comptant*, she was able to procure all the money that she wanted and her prodigal expenditure made heavy demands on the Treasury. Louis XV, without being aware of it, spent on or through her sixty million francs. One million, three hundred thousand francs went on her clothes. One million, two hundred thousand francs were paid to her domestics, three million, five hundred and four thousand, three hundred and eighty francs were spent on her table, plays or fêtes cost another four millions, carriages and horses three millions, diamonds two millions, pictures sixty thousand francs; books twelve thousand francs, the upkeep of the Château de Crécy amounted to six hundred and fifty thousand francs, la Celle cost two hundred and sixty thousand francs and the three hermitages (at Versailles, Fontainebleau and Compiègne) amounted in all to five hundred and twenty-nine thousand, three hundred and ninety-five francs. Madame de Pompadour's *hôtel* at Versailles cost two hundred and ten thousand, eight hundred and four francs.

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the building alone, and at Paris the Hôtel d'Estreux was bought for the Marquise for the sum of seven hundred and thirty thousand francs and cost ninety five thousand, one hundred and sixty nine francs in decorations The Château de Bellevue swallowed up two millions, five hundred and twenty-six thousand nine hundred and twenty-seven francs and the Marquise of Ménar, Brimborion Babiole Garancière Denx-Eglises Bret la Roche la Rivière robbed the Treasury of thirty-six millions

Notwithstanding his appalling liberality to the Marquise de Pompadour, Louis broke loose from her yet once again when despite all her efforts he embarked on a love affair with Mademoiselle Murphy and more especially with Mademoiselle de Romans The last-named bore him a son whom the King urged solicited and implored by the mother very reluctantly consented to acknowledge

Worried by these *liaisons* overwhelmed by the disasters of the Seven Years War worn out by the life which she had led since 1745 Madame de Pompadour who since 1756 had suffered from violent palpitations of the heart grew weaker and weaker but refused to recognize the fact She continued to lead what she called her terrible life, to weave and unravel intrigues to fight for her power 'My life is a battle' she murmured wearily but she never attempted to cease the struggle It was painful to see her so emaciated and ill had she become Her weakness did not prevent her from repairing to Choisy but she was obliged to take to her bed on the 28th of February 1764 The doctors pronounced her to be suffering from inflammation of the lungs and ordered her to

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take the greatest care. She remained at Choisy until the 24th of March when both the King and she believed that the period of convalescence had begun. A mass for thanksgiving was said in the Marquise's parish and she herself started to journey slowly back to Versailles, where she arrived on the 7th of April. She had hardly settled in when her malady increased and the physicians deemed it necessary to warn the sick woman that her end must be near.

Madame de Pompadour received the news of her probable demise with absolute indifference. She was so utterly weary, she had struggled so desperately that she viewed her end in the light of deliverance. In her illness she maintained the same *sang-froid* which she had manifested in power, and made all her last arrangements with remarkable lucidity and courage. After she had drawn up her will, in which she bequeathed the Hôtel d'Evreux, now the Palais de l'Elysée, to Louis, she turned her attention to the conventions which ought to be observed in connection with her death. It seemed to her that to depart without making her confession would be almost an outrage and she asked the King what he thought about it. Louis replied that he should be pleased to see her reconciled to God. So she sent for the parish priest and confessed according to the rules of Holy Church. Those about her observed that "she was packing up properly this time." Suffocating and unable to remain in bed, she caused herself to be dressed and applied rouge to her cheeks to conceal her pallor. Her *toilette* completed, she received yet once more Janelle, the Postmaster-General, and went through the correspondence with him, this was her last act of power.

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During the night of April the 14th-15th Madame de Pompadour received the last sacrament and this ceremony over she then sent for her husband. But Monsieur d'Etioles refused to obey her summons on the plea of illness. Louis XV saw the Marquise again for the last time after she had received extreme unction. Fully conscious and retaining her strength of will to the end she thought of everything even down to choosing the coach which should convey her remains to her house at Versailles and summoning Monsieur de Soubise to take over her keys of office, she displayed to the very end a rare courage. It was not until seven o'clock in the evening of April the 15th, Palm Sunday that she died. Not for one single instant was her face contorted by the thought of death and she never complained nor made a gesture of impatience.

Thus passed away at the age of forty three, calmly and with dignity this favourite who for nineteen years had made France yield to the force of her will. Fragile and pretty as the Sèvres statuettes which France owes to her she was broken by her task but unvanquished. She who had seen philosophic France and monarchical Europe at her feet had the proud joy of dying at Versailles like a Princess of the Blood. But hardly had she breathed her last when rolled up in the sheets of her bed she was hastily and unceremoniously removed on a stretcher no one troubling about the State coach which she had arranged should convey her remains home.

On the 17th of April at six o'clock in the evening Madame de Pompadour's funeral procession started up at the Church of Notre Dame at Versailles on its way to the Church of the Capuchins in Paris. A terrible

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storm raged and the wind blew a hurricane which extinguished the torches carried in the *contège*. The King stood bareheaded on his balcony despite the elements and remained there as long as he could see anything of the funeral procession of the woman who had filled such a big place in his life. When the last carriage had passed out of sight he re-entered his *appartement* deeply depressed, observing, "That was all the honour which I could pay her!"

The church dignitary on whom fell the duty of holding the funeral oration proceeded to pay the last respects to the dead by avoiding all mention of her life and by showing that inasmuch as she had lived with Queen Marie Leczinska, Madame de Pompadour had been in the best school of virtue.

Lastly, Madame de la Tour de Franqueville in a letter to Jean Jacques Rousseau, written shortly after Madame de Pompadour's death, remarked: "I am not surprised to see the Marquise as generally regretted as she was generally hated. The French are best at everything the world over; so it is only natural that they should excel in inconsistency."

But the French people were not inconsistent in regretting Madame de Pompadour. They recalled the charm and fascination of this witty, elegant woman, who was endowed with so many gifts and who had such a strong will beneath her delicate, fragile appearance. Posterity pleads as excuse for her inability to measure the evil which she wrought that her morals were those of her century and that she partially atoned for her faults by her good taste, by the generous patronage which she extended to artists and men of letiers, and by the excellent influence she exerted over them.

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MADEMOISELLE DE LESPINASSE

MADEMOISELLE DE LESPINASSE was one of those beings who are sacrificed before they are born. She was born on the wrong side of the blanket and the irregularity of her birth was to be a great drawback all her life and to prevent her from attaining that happiness which, on several occasions seemed to be almost within her grasp. So pathetic a figure is she that she has inspired a novel¹.

Julie Jeanne Eléonore de Lespinasse was the illegitimate daughter of a married woman of great charm and she too was chiefly acquainted with the sad and disappointing side of life. Julie's mother had been married very young to her cousin who like herself was the sole representative of an illustrious and very wealthy Burgundian family. The relations and friends who urged the marriage had no other thought than to bring the fortunes of the two branches of the family under a single control and did not trouble themselves about the feelings of the young people. The result was that the youthful Comtesse d'Alton was never happy with her husband, although two children a boy and a girl were born to them. After four years of married life there was a legal separation. Everything went to prove that the husband was in the wrong for the Countess obtained sole custody of both the children.

Left so young without a guardian or anyone to advise her the Countess who was of an affectionate and

¹ Mrs Humphrey Ward's *Miss Faversham's Daughter*

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highly imaginative disposition, confided her troubles to a friend who became her lover. From this union two children were born out of wedlock, a boy who took holy orders while quite young, and the girl who is the subject of our sketch. The following certificate of baptism records the child's entry into the world

"On November 10th, 1732, was baptized Julie Jeanne, Eléonore de Lespinasse, born yesterday, legitimate daughter of Claude l'Espinasse, citizen of Lyon (Lyons) and of Julie Navarre, his wife God-father, Sieur Louis Basiliac, surgeon, juror of Lyon. Godmother, Julie Lechot, represented by Madeleine Ganivet, wife of the said Sieur Basiliac. In the absence of the father, two witnesses, together with the god-father and godmother have signed instead.

In testimony thereof . . .

Signed · BASILIAC, Ambroise, Vicar "

Some time later another hand wrote the syllable "il" before *legitimate* (which thus became illegitimate) and deleted the words "his wife", putting in the margin a cross, the customary symbol of an irregular birth

It is obvious that this certificate of baptism is false. The Comtesse d'Albon concealed her identity. She retired to the house of a doctor in Lyons, a long distance from her own home, there to give birth to her child, and the father mentioned in the certificate had no existence in fact. Claude de l'Espinasse is a fictitious name, but Lespinasse was the name of one of the Countess's estates. We must not, however, be in a hurry to blame her. If she lacked the courage openly to acknowledge Julie as her daughter, at least she cherished for this child a most tender and devoted

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maternal love As soon as the little creature could leave her foster-mother, the Countess had her brought to the Château d'Avange where she lavished upon her the fondest and most devoted affection Julie was brought up with her brother, Camille d'Albon sharing in his games and the care bestowed on him It is true that she saw less of her sister Diane d'Albon, but this was due to the difference of sixteen years between them

Julie at this period was perfectly happy But her mother was afraid for her she was torn with anxiety when she thought of her little girl's future and of her father's indifference Not one of his contemporaries has mentioned this father either from ignorance or from fear of his animosity or more probably, because they did not think they had sufficient proof to bring his name forward We are indebted to Monsieur de Ségur for the knowledge that Gaspard de Vichy was, without any doubt the father of Julie de Lespinasse

Gaspard de Vichy was related to the Comte and Comtesse d'Albon by blood and like all the de Vichys of his generation was witty highly cultured and naturally fascinating but egotistical hard arbitrary cynical in his remarks and unscrupulous in his behaviour The discovery of these traits was forced on the poor Countess when after sacrificing everything to him she found him to be nothing more than a cold and exacting man whose sole intention was to marry the daughter of the Comte and Comtesse d'Albon For him the past had no existence except for the right it gave him to dictate to the Countess The unhappy woman yielded but at the cost of what suffering !

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From the day of this marriage her melancholy became despair, her religion mysticism, and her health was irremediably shaken. Consequently she tried to impart her secret to Julie. She endeavoured to give this unprotected child a taste for monastic life. But however dreadful might be the story of her birth, Julie had a horror of the life of a convent. She wanted to live, to act, to feel, the deeps of life called her. The gentle Countess felt herself growing weaker every day and was powerless to alter her daughter's tastes. At one moment she contemplated rehabilitating her in the family with the support of the law, which recognizes then, as it recognizes to-day, all children born during marriage as belonging to the husband. But she dared not do so on account of her son-in-law.

Neither dared she bequeath her daughter Julie an annual income of more than 300 francs. But she accumulated a considerable sum of money for her in her desk. In this manner she sought to make Julie financially independent against the time when she should be deprived of her mother's protection.

In order that no one should raise objections to this small fortune for her darling daughter, Madame d'Albon informed Julie of what she had done. At the same time she handed her the key of the desk in which the money was locked, and ordered her to say nothing to anybody concerning the little hoard. She also added, that as the other children were so much better placed, it was only fair that Julie should keep this little store for herself. Julie gratefully received the key of this precious piece of furniture, but promised faithfully not to make any use of it.

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Day by day, the Countess declined in health and Julie was scarcely sixteen when this very dear mother was taken from her. The poor orphan's grief was heart-rending. It was feared that she would fall ill and in the first days which followed her loss she only regained sufficient composure to hand to her brother Camille the key of the desk where her mother thought she had amassed enough money to ensure the independence of her beloved daughter.

Thus Julie voluntarily despoiled herself of that which would have made her independent because with her frank and honest nature, she considered she would be failing in her duty to the family if she kept the money. She was soon to learn that her relations did not intend to treat her with a similar delicacy. Indeed partly from charity and partly from greed the de Vichys suggested that she should go and live with them at their Château Champrond. They thought that under their guardianship she would be unable to pursue the idea of rehabilitation which the Countess had meditated. This idea carried to its logical conclusion would have given the orphan a share in the inheritance of the Comte and Comtesse d'Albon.

Disinherited and alone in the world Mademoiselle de Lespinasse accepted the offer of her sister and brother in law and from this moment her life in their home was full of humiliation and suffering. Treated sometimes as a poor relation from whom countless services are exacted and sometimes as an unpaid servant enjoying special privileges she was continually oppressed by the care which Gaspard de Vichy took to emphasize her inferiority to his wife and him all with the object of dispelling any lurking idea which

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she might have of bringing an action against them, a means to which Julie would not in any case have resorted. The four years at Champrond were four years of moral torture to one so highly strung and sensitive as Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. At one time she contemplated withdrawing to the religious life in accordance with her mother's wishes, but in August 1752, someone came to Champrond who was to change the whole course of her existence.

This unexpected benefactress was none other than Gaspard de Vichy's own sister, the Marquise du Deffand. This lady, after a long childhood, passed behind the *grille* of a Benedictine convent in Paris, had married at the age of twenty-one the Marquis du Deffand, a man of lofty birth, but of mediocre intelligence, and a mischiefmaker. He introduced his young Marquise at the Regent's Court, and she was thus initiated into the depraved life of the period and shared its extravagance. In order to recuperate, after ten years of this irregular life, Madame du Deffand obtained a legal separation from her husband, and engaged in a serious *liaison* with the *Président* Hénault, an accomplished type of worldly magistrate, who brought as little love to the affair as did the Marquise. "It is delightful to have you away", she wrote to her friend, the *Président*. And he could think of no truer compliment than "Dear friend, you are a necessary evil". This *liaison* after a time gave place to friendship with people of wit and culture whom the Marquise now sought for the purpose of forming a *salon* on the model of that of the Duchesse du Maine at Sceaux.¹

¹ See *La Duchesse du Maine in Princesses, Ladies and Adventuresses of the Court of Louis XIV*

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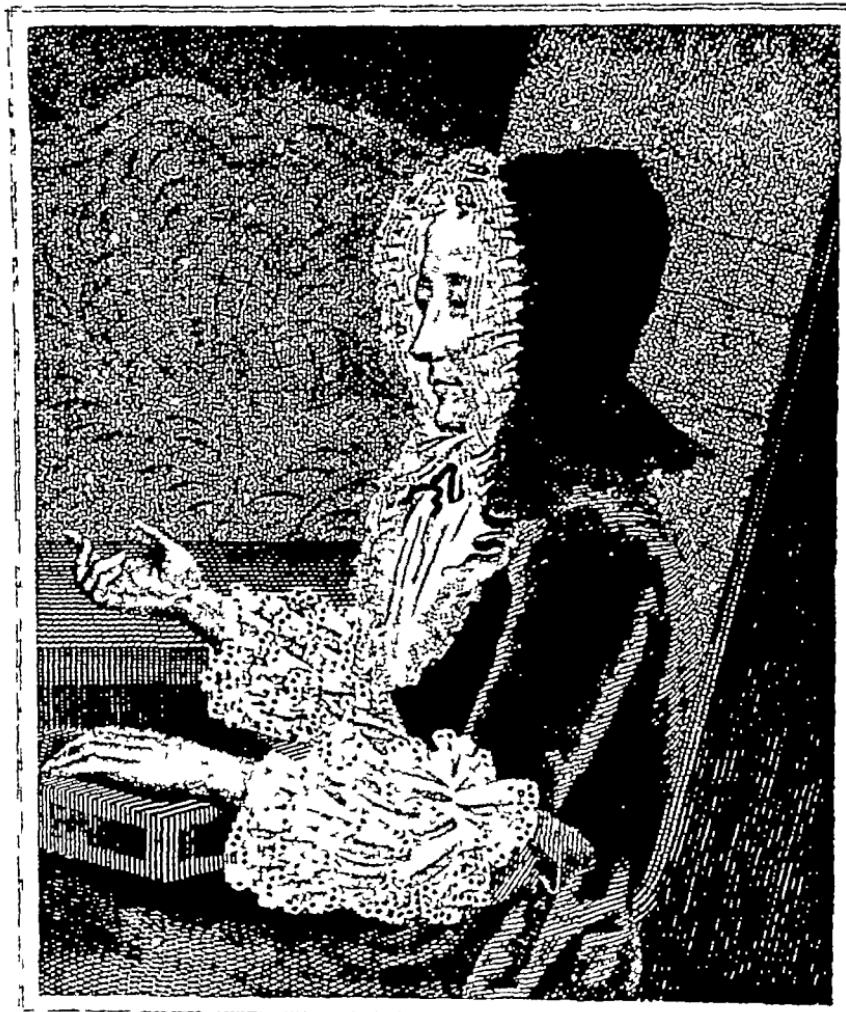
Since 1747 the Marquise a brilliant conversationalist had been making preparations to secure for her old age a circle of witty, cultivated distinguished friends who would meet in her elegant and discreet *appartement* in the Convent of Saint-Joseph, which had once been occupied by the Marquise de Montespan¹. While thus engaged she was threatened with blindness and after consulting in vain those who could best avert the evil she left Paris discouraged and sought solace in the country.

She arrived at Champrond at the end of August 1752, when Julie de Lespinasse was seriously thinking of leaving it. The hardness of middle-age in Madame du Deffand was to soften by contact with the unhappy youth of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. The silent depression of the young girl was to appeal to the sympathy of the disillusioned woman, and out of the meeting of two sorrowful beings the spark of friendship and hope was to be kindled. Soon the two women had long talks together a proposal of Madame du Deffand very vague at first then more definite to take the orphan away with her, left Mademoiselle de Lespinasse in a state of hesitation.

However after this proposal which restored her soul's lost courage Julie found life at Champrond absolutely unbearable. A few weeks later she left the home where she had suffered so much by stealth and sought refuge at Lyons. From this town the young girl always so considerate and loving wrote an affectionate frank and sorrowful letter to her brother Camille in which she described her suffering at

¹ See *Madame de Montespan in France and her Influence on the Court of Louis XIV*

PLATE. XIII



MARIE DE VICHY CHAMPROND MARQUISE DU DEFFAND
1697-1780

Print after Carmotelle's portrait

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Champrond and asked him to help her to forget them by paying the moderate annual income which she required in order to be received as a boarder in a convent at Lyons. It was but a trifling sum in comparison with the real fortune which Julie had presented to her brother when she handed him the key of the mysterious desk, and of which he had never given her a penny. But whatever he might owe to this simple child, Camille had no intention of remembering it. So he only replied in a few hard, cold words ordering her to return to Champrond without delay. Camille, indeed, was far more afraid of Madame du Deffand's proposal to which Julie had alluded in her letter, than of the convent at Lyons. The whole family trembled lest Julie, if she went to Paris, might, on the advice of Madame du Deffand and her friends, reconsider the Comtesse d'Albon's idea of rehabilitation. The disappointment caused by Camille's letter of refusal decided Julie's departure to Paris, which was, moreover, advised by Cardinal de Tencin. This departure took place in the second half of April, 1754.

Julie de Lespinasse was now twenty-two and formed both in mind and body. She had every quality which made for beauty, and yet she was not pretty. Perhaps she might have been considered prettier if her head had been larger. For no feature could show to full advantage in the small amount of space available in such a little head. Her neck was slender, but lacked that graceful curve which sets off the face. Her brown hair was very luxuriant, but it had the effect of being too heavy for the tiny head over which it rioted in every direction. A roguish little nose with an upward tilt which expressed the mischief, humour and whimsicality

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of Julie's character imparted animation to the perfect oval of the face while her magnificent deepset dark eyes expressed all her passion and vivacity. She had her gentle mother's eyes but they were much more sparkling much finer and altogether more expressive. Everything that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse thought or felt was immediately reflected in her face. She was tall slim well made and distinguished. The plainness of her dress was almost monastic yet its simple severity in no way detracted from her grace. She had an exceedingly easy carriage which was in complete harmony with her lithe graceful movements. Since she was so richly dowered it is difficult to understand how honest d'Alembert could write to her on one occasion 'I will not speak of your face, you yourself do not attach any importance to it.' One of her biographers was to write 'She was anything but beautiful but her ugliness was attractive.'

The most attractive thing about Julie de Lespinasse was undoubtedly her moral personality. A more loyal nature than hers never existed. Incapable of pettiness there were no limits to her devotion and her thoughtfulness accomplished wonders. She wanted to please and to be sympathetic to all with whom she came in contact. The indifference even of humble acquaintances caused her profound discomfort. With her to please was a veritable instinct a necessity of nature. And very useful too was this charming necessity for it gave to Mademoiselle de Lespinasse her understanding of the mind heart and soul of those around her and inspired the means by which she raised them to her own level in supplying what they lacked. Those who were fond of Julie de Lespinasse were witty

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and gay as herself when in her company. In the face of such unusual gifts, is it not easy to forgive her for "liking grammar far too much", and for being "often rather cross and uneven-tempered"? ¹

But this was not the disquieting point in Mademoiselle de Lespinasse's character. It was her excitability in love that upset the balance of her life and made a martyr of her. She would recognize no obstacle when she loved, and passion made her violent and ungovernable to the point of madness.

Madame du Deffand longed for Mademoiselle de Lespinasse's arrival in Paris with all the strength of her imperious will. She already called her "my queen", and prepared the young girl's reception with a care, a skill and an energy full of warm affection, and tact. "An orphan who is as distinguished as she is unfortunate", she told her circle "Sensitive, intelligent, endearing". So Madame du Deffand's circle impatiently awaited Mademoiselle de Lespinasse and loved her almost before she appeared. It was quite another matter after they had actually experienced the warmth of those affections, the charm of that wit which made other wits sparkle, and the vigour of that activity which put life into everything.

Consequently almost the whole circle sighed for Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. The earliest victims were the Chevalier d'Aydis, the Président Hénault, who wanted to marry her, and de Taaffe, an Irish cadet, the first person to make Julie's heart beat. Madame du Deffand disapproved of her *protégée's* love for the young Irishman. She even forbade her

¹ Portrait in verse of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse by one of the habituées of the Saint-Joseph salon

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queen' to have any private conversation with the foreigner. But however desirous Julie might be to please her benefactress, and fond of her as she was in this particular instance she openly opposed her Mademoiselle de Lespinasse experiencing for the first time an emotion akin to passion betrayed something of that impetuosity of sentiment which later on was to make her sacrifice all for love. In spite of Madame du Deffand's orders, Julie sought out de Taaffe in the Marquise's *salon*, redoubled her attentions was more amiable than ever and arranged several *tete-à-têtes* with him. Madame du Deffand who was astonished and annoyed made the young girl remain in her own room when the Irishman called. Julie submitted with a bad grace and when she was allowed to come down to the *salon* again she did not hide the pain which the cadet's absence caused her.

Now in Madame du Deffand's *salon* there was a man whose feelings for Julie were far deeper and more ardent than those of the cadet. This man was a prominent figure in Paris and Europe generally. He was, perhaps the most welcome among the visitors to the *appartement* in the convent of Saint-Joseph. In any case he was the visitor whom Madame du Deffand was proudest to receive. She had even schemed to lure him away from Madame Geoffrin¹ and now that she had captured him she was jealous of his friendship and presence as she had never been jealous of any lover in the days of her youth. This man was d'Alembert the philosopher. From the moment when he had observed the orphan in the Marquise's *salon* he lost both his sense of proportion and his peace

¹ See chapter on *Madame Geoffrin*.

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of mind This young girl appeared to him wholly lovable, even to those very traits and gestures disliked by others. He would have been unhappy if anything had been changed in her. From the day on which he first saw Julie de Lespinasse she alone reigned in his heart. Julie had now become Madame du Deffand's reader, and very soon her interesting, animated conversation, which was at the same time so light and tactful, charmed d'Alembert to such an extent that he suddenly lost all taste for the brilliant, trenchant wit of the lady of the house, in spite of its sparkle and originality. To converse freely with Mademoiselle de Lespinasse on all questions in which he was absorbed or interested now seemed one of the greatest and sweetest of life's pleasures. D'Alembert thought he might procure this pleasure by arriving at Madame du Deffand's house before she was ready to receive her guests, in which case her place would be taken by the young reader The Marquise went to bed very late and often lay awake far into the night, listening while Julie read aloud hour after hour To make up for the sleep which forsook her at night she spent the greater part of the day in bed, and did not appear before her guests until close upon six o'clock in the evening

It was easy for d'Alembert to carry out his plan for a talk with Mademoiselle de Lespinasse He made the attempt and was delighted. He had never expected to enjoy half the pleasure which he derived from the first *tête-à-tête* with Julie So, the next day he arrived a little earlier and his pleasure was doubled Encouraged by the success of his venture, d'Alembert made a habit of arriving earlier and earlie

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Convent of Saint-Joseph and one day he begged Mademoiselle de Lespinasse to admit him to her room so that they might talk yet earlier in the afternoon. The young girl's room in no way resembled a *salon*. It was small, badly furnished, and an attic. But to use it for the reception of d'Alembert was to increase their intellectual enjoyment a hundredfold. So Julie yielded to his request and henceforward the philosopher could take his friends with him to enjoy her conversation. Turgot, Marmontel, Chastellux and many others shared this treat. So it was that before Madame du Deffand opened her *salon* a *bureau d'esprit* had been held for hours under her roof.

The shrewd Marquise felt that something irregular was going on. In the first month after Julie's arrival she had been conscious of d'Alembert's defection. Soon she became jealous and suspicious of her *protégée*. She tried to spy on her and humiliate her. She lengthened the nocturnal reading hours on purpose to bore and tire her reader. She used her subtle and sharp wit every day more frequently to have a fling at her and wound her with pin pricks. In short the unpleasantness became more and more marked until the moment when through a servant's indiscretion Madame du Deffand learnt the truth.

It was the end of April 1764 exactly ten years since the arrival of the young country girl whose qualities and charms made her all unwillingly and unwittingly her employer's rival.

Madame du Deffand's anger was terrible. She cried out that she had been betrayed. Unforgettable words were spoken by both women. If it had not been for her I should have kept d'Alembert. Madame du

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Deffand repeated over and over in exasperated and despairing tones. They separated abruptly. It was d'Alembert who took the initiative and made the arrangements. He loved Mademoiselle de Lespinasse too much to allow her to be exposed to Madame du Deffand's hatred. But Julie, who had received no salary from Madame du Deffand, was without means, and d'Alembert was poor. His love made him ingenuous. He interested all their mutual friends in Mademoiselle de Lespinasse's fate.

And so it happened that the Président Hénault, Madame du Deffand's real lover, Turgot, d'Ussé, and Madame de Chatillon, got up a subscription for her. The Maréchale de Luxembourg presented her with a complete set of furniture. Madame Geoffrin offered the purchase of three Vanloos to the Empress of Russia, and kept the sum realized for Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. These three pictures fetched ten thousand crowns, to which Madame Geoffrin added a pension of three hundred crowns. Julie was able with part of this money to move house. On the other hand, the money which remained and what she received from all her friends and admirers gave her a yearly income of eight thousand, five hundred *livres*. It was more than she had ever possessed or dared to hope for. It was even sufficient to justify the boldness which had prompted d'Alembert and Julie to choose the rue Saint-Dominique quite close to the convent of Saint-Joseph, as the residence of Madame du Deffand's former reader.

But Julie had hardly settled in her new abode when, as a result of fatigue and emotional exertion, she fell a victim to that terrible disease.

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which throughout the centuries has never ceased to ravage the towns of France D Alembert without a moment's hesitation installed himself at the invalid's bedside and battled for her life with death His devotion and skilful nursing triumphed gloriously over the scourge but Julie was scarcely convalescent when d Alembert was stricken by the same sickness She repaid the philosopher with equal care and devotion and she, too succeeded in snatching the victim from death so that d Alembert in his turn entered on a period of convalescence

These two illnesses had proved to d'Alembert and the orphan how necessary they were to each other and how absolutely they could count on one another So in the autumn of 1765 d Alembert consented to make his home with Julie de Lespinasse who became the most devoted of sisters to the philosopher Every one approved of this arrangement and henceforth no one thought of inviting one without the other or of supposing that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse and d Alembert could live apart They were still less able to do so now since it was d Alembert's ambition that his friends should make Julie's *salon* theirs The idea of opening a new *salon* in Paris in 1765 might be considered a very rash proceeding seeing that all grades of society the wits included had their own The philosophers men of letters artists and the thinkers in Europe generally congregated round Madame Geoffrin's *fauteuil*¹ Madame du Deffand presided over the society in which moved the greater wits and people of birth Madame Necker had large philosophical and social parties Numbers of other *salons* catered for

¹ See the chapter on Madame Geoffrin

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less serious and more worldly, or more specialized tastes Consequently, d'Alembert's ambition that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse should have a *salon* of her own would appear, to say the least, irrational

D'Alembert knew that if the philosophers and encyclopædists met at Madame Geoffrin's, the encyclopædists, in particular, would find but little freedom. The mistress of the house had a gift rather for organization than inspiration She pigeon-holed the ideas which she had acquired but was never impelled to derive new ones from them Julie de Lespinasse would exert a very different influence. Her intellect, throbbing with life, her warm, supple wit, would lead the thinkers ever onwards So d'Alembert insisted, and soon this unpretentious *salon* at which neither supper nor dinner was served, became the favourite *rendezvous* of the encyclopædists There, released from the artistic atmosphere in which they languished at Madame Geoffrin's, and inspired by the intellect and wit of the mistress of the house, who, sinking herself in others, took an intense and personal interest in all the discussions, respected everybody's individuality, and had the gift of giving a deeper significance to the ideas of those who conversed with her, these rising men developed and grew as they had never done anywhere else Mademoiselle de Lespinasse's *salon* was less brilliant than those born before hers, but it had a much more substantial influence on the progress of ideas and its effect on society was greater, more immediate and more effectual

Yet after five or six years Julie was unhappy because the simple friendship which she had for d'

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did not satisfy her any more than the limited pleasures of society and literature. She discovered in her heart a hunger for love, self-sacrifice and suffering. It was just at this time that the Marquis de Mora entered her life. Married at the age of twelve to a woman whom he had never loved, de Mora became a widower at twenty. At the age of twenty-two he met in December, 1766, Julie de Lespinasse whose passionate nature took fire at his beauty and distinction.

'A face full of kindness and charm which inspires confidence and friendship... a character sweet and pliant without being insipid... a gentle passion without fire... a mind strong sound full of light and shade... a heart! Ah what a heart! In a word this man realizes my idea of perfection!' wrote Julie de Lespinasse on the evening (December 19th 1766) when she had first met the Marquis de Mora.

Two years later this man who was so much admired asked Julie de Lespinasse to become his wife, but he was only twenty-four and Julie was thirty-six! He belonged to one of the noblest families in Spain and she had nothing but a borrowed name! 'We love each other, therefore we are equal in everything', he said to Julie. But though this creature of love might quiver and tremble with passion, she refused to saddle the man whom she adored with a maturity that might one day become irksome nor cause him to blush for her ignoble birth. They steeped themselves in a feverish platonic love while Julie remained firm in her resolution. When they were separated by both military and paternal authority, Julie spent her life in

waiting for letters from Spain. Their arrival twice a week threw her into a fever and convulsions. In August, 1771, the Marquis de Mora's sudden return to Paris plunged Julie de Lespinasse once more into an intoxicating love, as pure as it was entralling. But the Marquis was stricken by consumption, of which he was to die, and August was to be the last happy month of these delights.

The love of Julie de Lespinasse and the Marquis de Mora which was so beautiful and so ardent, was but the first stage in this fiery soul's progress along the path of passion. The person to replace the Marquis de Mora in the heart of his mistress was his opposite both in appearance and mentality. It was Guibert, whom the eighteenth century, especially the women, admired to distraction. La Harpe, not without justification, scornfully remarked "He aims at nothing less than filling the place of Turenne, Corneille and Bossuet." With him the excitement and turbulence of passion took the place of love. He treated Julie de Lespinasse as he had treated many women. Attractive and persistent before obtaining the desired favour, indifferent and brutal as soon as he was satisfied. "You do not know me as I am", Julie de Lespinasse wrote to him in heart-rending letters of love and regret, "Remember, I can face suffering and death, and tell me, after that, if I am like those women who can but please and amuse!" or again "Oh! I hate you for having taught me hope, fear, pain and pleasure!"

It was in February, 1774, that Julie surrendered to Guibert's caprice. This fact made so deep an impression on her life that on the anniversary of the day in the

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following year she wrote at midnight ' It was on the 10th of February last year that I was intoxicated with a poison of which I still feel the effects ' But this intoxication in no wise lessened her sufferings ' My friend I suffer every instant of my life, I love you and am waiting for you '

He made her wait so long that in order to forget the hours Julie de Lespinasse who had no longer the strength to bear such suffering, took opium and killed herself little by little ' I have only known hell, and sometimes heaven ! ' Oh God ! How natural passion is to me ! and what a stranger I am to reason ! Julie better than anyone knew her own weakness She knew she would never be cured of it she admitted it and her avowal and power to love and suffer are at once startling and pitiful How empty was this heart which had the capacity to love so much !

When in July 1776 opium and love had done their work of destruction the unhappy d'Alembert after paying the last rites to the dead, set about the painful task of selecting and sorting the papers which she had left behind Among the faded sheets he found many letters from the Marquis de Mora still more from Guibert (none of them however, love-letters), but not a single letter of his own had been kept by the woman whom he had loved so much ! Many and many a time did d'Alembert go through the closely written sheets but not one bore his name ! ' I have lost sixteen years of my life ! ' he exclaimed when he finally realized that Julie's fiery soul had never understood his discreet and sober friendship

And yet, it was largely due to d'Alembert that

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Julie de Lespinasse, with no name, no beauty, no fortune, was able to create one of the most fashionable *salons* in an epoch which counted them by the dozen. But it is only fair to add that notwithstanding d'Alembert's help and will, Julie de Lespinasse would never have exerted so profound and illuminating an influence upon her century had she not been gifted with a sympathetic and brilliant wit of her own, and an enthusiastic and affectionate nature.

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MARIE THÉRÈSE RICHARD DE RUFFEY
MARQUISE DE MONNIER CALLED SOPHIE
DE MONNIER

NEVER did love occupy so prominent a place in the life of France as in the second half of the eighteenth century. It appeared under its many forms tyrannical, heroic, brazen and furtive, robust and insane. It was to be met with everywhere in the very highest classes as well as among the people and the *bourgeoisie*, and everywhere it was varied and diverse as never before. Often a pair of lovers would present the most startling contrast imaginable. Such was the *liaison* between Mirabeau and the Marquise de Monnier which is one of the most striking of these amazing cases.

Their convulsive and most pathetic romance is not the story of two beings attracted to each other by similar tastes who are so much alike that in the end their identities become merged in common desires and sentiments. On the contrary their passion was as fundamentally different as their hearts and characters. Mirabeau's fiery ardour was mingled with that impudence and inconsistency which the future tribune was to bring into his political life. The Marquise de Monnier like the expiring Royalty encountered the most unexpected and sudden changes in Mirabeau's behaviour. He who set snares for the monarchy and employed the same passion to save it as he had



GABRIEL HONORÉ BIQUET DE MIRABEAU

March 1749 April 1791 The greatest orator of the French Revolution

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done to compass its downfall, began by intoxicating his mistress with the ardour and constancy of his love, only to end by throwing her into despair over his change of mood

Sophie de Monnier, very different from Mirabeau, brought to this *liaison*, a gentleness, a self-effacement, a submissiveness, a boundless tenderness, and a faithful love which never lessened. Thus the lovers formed a complete contrast, and it is only after studying their characters, Mirabeau's especially, that one is able fully to understand their story.

Gabriel Honoré Biquet de Mirabeau was born at the Château de Bignon (Loiret) on the 9th of March, 1749, and in him all the gifts of his race and all its passions found their strongest expression. His family, Italian in origin, had early settled in the south of France, its members were possessed of strong feelings, violent tempers and passionate, sensual natures. Jean Antoine de Mirabeau, an ancestor of our hero, had such power to inspire love that at the age of forty, although he had but one arm, for he had lost the other in the war, although he wore a silver collar to keep his head erect and was not only mutilated by wounds but a prey to frequent and terrible outbursts of passion, nevertheless so captivated Mademoiselle Françoise de Castellane that she determined to marry him at all costs and vowed to him a love as ardent as it was ecstatic.

A son of this Jean Antoine and Mademoiselle de Castellane owed his career to the tender affection of the Margrave de Bayreuth.

Vauvenargues, wishing to describe the character of Gabriel Honoré's father, who was one of his friends,

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said to him " You my dear Mirabeau are fiery, choleric and tender, prouder more restless, and more unstable than the sea mordinately greedy for pleasure, for love, for knowledge for honour " The same Mirabeau said of himself at the age of twenty five ' Sensuality has become the tyrant of my imagination to violate conventions is to me second nature '

All these characteristics were repeated in Sophie de Monnier's lover with greater whimsicality and in consequence but although Mirabeau was as fiery as his father, he was free from the brutality, tyranny and arrogance which characterized the latter

Gabriel Honoré de Mirabeau's tendency to strong and sensual passions was aggravated during his childhood and adolescence by his father's injustice Monsieur de Mirabeau could not forgive his son the ugliness of his face Now this ugliness did not date from birth It was the result of a too drastic and unwise treatment to which the Marquise de Mirabeau had subjected the child when he was but three years old, in order to cure him of small-pox The father, irritated by this face pitted seamed and unpleasant to the eye, treated his son with the harshest severity, never showing him the slightest indulgence and exercising the most brutal authority over a boy whose passionate nature needed a very gentle discipline His sole kindness consisted in supplying his son with excellent tutors The young man who was as marvellously intelligent as he was keen, made splendid use of his lessons They were the most lasting of all his pleasures when he began to go out into the world for his father allowed him no liberty, no initiative going even so far as to force him to enter a regiment which was almost

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entirely composed of young people under the direct supervision of the Royal police.

Nevertheless, the youthful Comte de Mirabeau married of his own accord, on the 23rd of June, 1772. His bride was Mademoiselle Emilie de Marignan, of whom he himself remarked, and justly, that "she had neither the virtues nor the vices essential to stabilize his affections and his temperament."

This marriage gave the Marquis de Mirabeau an opportunity of displaying the most hard-hearted severity. The young couple began their married life with debts four times as big as their income and with no capital. The youthful count, perceiving that he could never equalize his position, entered upon a wild and reckless orgy of expenditure, buying more and more diamonds for the Countess, giving magnificent parties and signing whatever he was asked, without paying the remotest attention to his debts.

His father who, as we have seen, had no affection for him, only thought of the difficulties that such behaviour would create for the family, and hastened to take the necessary steps to obtain an injunction against his son. He carried the day on the 8th of June, 1774, and on the 20th of the following September, young Mirabeau was confined in the Château d'If and a little later in the Château de Joux. At the time that Mirabeau left for the Château d'If he was already the father of a boy and the Countess was expecting to be a mother again. The young husband thought that ties such as these should be sufficient to decide her to follow him into captivity. But the Countess refused, timidly at first, but later openly. Mirabeau, disappointed, considered that such conduct released

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him from all duty towards his wife and henceforward he sought to replace her in his heart

An opportunity did not occur at the Château d'If but to make up for this it presented itself easily and in charming guise at the very beginning of his incarceration in the fortress of Joux.

The little town of Pontarlier is quite close to this prison and here there lived at that time a woman who was infinitely charming and capable of the most disinterested and passionate love. She was twenty-one and had been married for four years to the Marquis de Monnier the first President of the *Chambre des Comptes* at Dôle. Marie-Thérèse Sophie Richard de Ruffey was only seventeen when she married the Marquis de Monnier a man of sixty five who did not hesitate to tell anyone who cared to listen that he had not the smallest love for his wife. He had married merely to annoy his daughters in general and one in particular. So this union was not only joyless and unromantic but lacking in that prudence and refinement which in default of love might have assured a good understanding.

Everybody in the little town knew that the Marquis de Monnier had married the daughter of his colleague de Ruffey President of the *Chambre des Comptes* at Dijon because in taking her he was saved the trouble of looking for a wife and because she suited his purpose as well as another. So the opportunists who rejoice to see homes broken up that they may reap an advantage expatiated in the presence of the young wife on her husband's indifference to her. They were rapturous in their praise of her attractions, and eloquent in their admiration of her beauty.

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It was easy to praise, for, although Madame de Monnier was not one of those pretty, graceful, refined types, there was, nevertheless, something dazzling in her beauty. Perfect health gave her a wonderful pink and white complexion and her incipient plumpness served but to conceal the angularities of her figure without detracting from its grace. She had a pair of magnificent and very gentle dark eyes with delicately defined eye-lashes and eyebrows like those of La Glaconda, which gave her, as in the case of the latter, a unique expression and lent beauty to the eyes by throwing them into high relief. Her brow was broad and intelligent, and her round face betokened kindliness. Her chin might have been a little longer, but such as it was it in no wise spoiled her face, and her exquisite teeth made ample amends for any imperfection of her chin. She was tall, very well made and admirably proportioned. Her disposition enhanced her beauty. One could read in her face the great kindness which always made her sink herself in others. Her wit was spontaneous, simple, natural and charming, artless and yet roguish, but without the slightest spite, always amusing and apposite.

Among the young dandies who overwhelmed Madame de Monnier with attentions and compliments, one of the most persistent was the Marquis de St Mauris, Governor of the prison at the Fortress of Joux, and, consequently, the person in whose hands lay Count Mirabeau's destinies. The young woman did not bestow on Monsieur de St Mauris any of those special favours which he ardently desired, but he was one of the intimate friends of the house and often went there at the time when Gabriel Honoré de Mirabeau was

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placed under his charge At this period Monsieur de Montperreux who was quartered in the same district, visited the de Monniers just as assiduously He was a better hand at paying a pretty compliment than Monsieur de St Mauris, and now that the young wife was aware of her charms she delighted in hearing them enumerated The spirit of the eighteenth century had invaded Pontarlier like the rest of France and here as elsewhere the court paid to the young Marquise was by turns intellectual, sentimental, frivolous and sometimes passionate It was because at certain times the heart of the young wife was touched by these gallantries that she felt a great sympathy for Monsieur de Montperreux and on several occasions did not hesitate to extricate him from some rather serious financial difficulties

But her kindness was remarked at Pontarlier It was commented on and exaggerated, and soon tales were spread which had no foundation in fact People went so far as to insinuate that a guilty intimacy existed between the neglected wife and the handsome officer, whereas in reality Madame de Monnier had nothing serious with which to reproach herself The Comte de Mirabeau heard these rumours when visiting Pontarlier in his walks abroad Monsieur de St Mauris, charmed with the wit the amiability and the many gifts of his prisoner gave him full liberty to leave the fortress and amuse himself in the neighbouring towns and even to attend social gatherings in the district Only one condition was attached to these various concessions, namely that the Count should always return to the Château de Joux no matter how late at night or how early in the morning So

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Mirabeau was able to follow without any difficulty the development of the slander and calumny and even to obtain an introduction to the Marquise.

It was the most opportune moment for making her acquaintance Madame de Monnier, troubled and hurt by all this baseless tittle-tattle, sought a friend on whom she might lean, a counsellor to guide and support her Mirabeau, with his keen intelligence and intuition, saw at once how he could turn the situation to account He determined to profit instantly by the circumstances, and as he too, in his way, was fascinating he had no doubts as to his success

Mirabeau's fascination consisted largely in his intelligence, his warm heart, and his wonderful voice His tawny-coloured eyes inflamed those with whom he conversed, his powers of persuasion were immense and his enthusiasm irresistible Finally, there were his exquisite hands with their eloquent and convincing gestures, the only parts of his person which were absolutely and delightfully pleasing She whom Mirabeau was soon to call his Sophie was conscious of these seductive forces from the very first moment that she saw the Count How could this creature, who had never yet belonged to anyone, help falling an easy victim to Mirabeau's passionate influence ? Her need of affection, her sensitiveness, her sweetness, her absolute unselfishness, conspired with Mirabeau's ardour, his sensuality, his imagination and his fire, to precipitate the moment when these two young people, athirst for love, threw themselves into each other's arms

To this husband without a wife, to this son of affection, to this prisoner without a f ..

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penniless Count who in order to gain a livelihood was reduced to writing books against the nobility to whose ranks he belonged the Marquise de Monnier seemed to be love happiness the compensation for all which he had suffered the supreme desire She seemed too, the ideal beauty among all the women whom he met he could discover nothing which could bear comparison with Sophie's charms

But still more than mere beauty Mirabeau appreciated in his beloved conquest the qualities which he lacked himself and which she possessed in the highest degree her unvarying sweetness and uniform good humour in face of his own uneven temper, her complete self-abnegation beside his exacting imperious self will Sophie joyfully sacrificed herself to the strong ebullient dominating personality of her lover Monsieur Barthou in his admirable work on Mirabeau has rightly stressed the fact that Sophie de Monnier and Mirabeau were attracted to and loved each other by reason of their contrast and that the young Marquise was of all women the one best suited to the fiery descendant of a violent restless and passionate race The difference between the two lovers was as great physically as it was morally We are already aware that Mirabeau's face seamed with scars colourless and plain, was in marked contrast to Madame de Monnier's fresh beauty This face so painful to look at, was surmounted by an enormous head which Mirabeau carried erect on broad heavy shoulders thus presenting a massive and powerful appearance almost disquieting by the side of the Marquise's beauty Mirabeau's bush of hair his tawny eyes big nose and tiny mouth made a strange

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contrast to Sophie's charms. Only the young Count's perfect row of even, sound teeth recalled one of Madame de Monnier's attractions.

Mirabeau was wittily amusing on the subject of his ugliness. He called himself "an athlete in love, whose passionate imagination is sulphuric" His violence equalled his warmth and he very quickly came to blows. But when he wished to be seductive nothing could withstand him Peasants, women, even the gaolers, succumbed to his power He could be sparkling, overwhelming, tender, caressing, captivating, and soothing His beautiful voice, so flexible and eager, could borrow every tone In him extremes seemed to meet He was the most natural of men, touching in his sincerity, and yet at the same time an expert actor and an audacious liar. He was, in short, "a magnificent exaggeration", and in order to perfect this exaggeration Mirabeau vaunted his passions, paraded them, yielded to them and made others yield also

No one submitted with a better grace or more pleasure than Sophie de Monnier The adoring mistress of all Mirabeau's characteristics, she became his grateful slave after the 13th of December, 1774, the first night of their intimacy Mirabeau knew her well when he said "My character is unequal, my susceptibility is prodigious, my vivacity excessive, it was essential that I should meet a woman as sweet and indulgent as Sophie "

Unfortunately, Pontarlier talked about the friendship of the Marquise for the Count as often as they had discussed her relations with Monsieur de Montperreux Soon the *liaison* of the two lovers

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secret to no one except to her husband Monsieur de St Mauris had peaceably accepted his repulse at the hands of the President's beautiful wife when he knew that no one else had won her heart but as soon as he heard of his prisoner's success he flew into a violent rage. He repented the favours which he had shown him and made up his mind to stop them. Was he going to allow the kindness which he had lavished on Mirabeau to serve no other purpose than that of rendering him ridiculous in the eyes of the woman whom he had wooed and of the man who but for his indulgence would never have succeeded in becoming the lady's lover? These reflections aggravated his wrath and spite and the Governor of Joux determined to avenge himself on the audacious Mirabeau by subjecting him to the ordinary prison treatment.

Mirabeau's gift of intuition however caused him to divine Monsieur de St Mauris' state of mind as soon as he had reason for believing that the Governor of Joux knew the truth. Deeming it more prudent to flee the prison than to expose himself to the danger of having to make his escape by ruse or force Mirabeau decided not to re-enter the fortress. For more than a week until the 16th of February, 1775 he succeeded in hiding in Pontarlier. But on that particular day he discovered that the pursuers were on his track and so resolved on another bold stroke not unmixed with comedy. He related the most ridiculous tale that ever diverted a vaudeville audience to Sophie's husband and on the strength of this story the credulous Marquis allowed his wife to go to Dijon where dwelt Monsieur and Madame de Russey. Thus Mirabeau succeeded in getting his mistress out of Pontarlier.

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This was the essential for the moment. He himself repaired to Dijon almost as soon as the Marquise, and on the very evening of his arrival he had the temerity to accompany his beloved to a brilliant ball given by Monsieur de Montherot, Provost-marshall of Burgundy.

This temerity was carrying indiscretion too far for it to pass unnoticed. On the night of the ball itself Monsieur de Montherot warned Louis XVI's Minister of Mirabeau's presence in Dijon. A few days later the Provost-marshall received an order to have Mirabeau confined in the Château of Dijon, allowing him, however, a measure of liberty. But Monsieur de Montherot was saved the trouble of putting this order into execution, for Mirabeau, scenting danger, fled during the night of the 24th-25th of March, 1775, to Switzerland and installed himself at Verrières. Despite her ardent desire, Sophie had not been able to follow him and now that her whole intrigue was disclosed, she was faced with the menace of imprisonment in *La Salpêtrière*. Elated by her love, feverish from fear of being for ever separated from Mirabeau and shut up for the rest of her life in a penitentiary, she told herself that she had no choice between flight and death by her own hand. She tried to flee, but her family guarded her so effectually that her attempts miscarried and only ended in entangling her lover who was so hard pressed by his pursuers that he had to seek refuge in Savoy. Here, Mirabeau consoled himself for the absence of his mistress by seducing one of his cousins, Mademoiselle de la Tour Beaulieu, although she was engaged to be married. With him the need for sensations was so imperious and his sensual appetites so inordinate that he was unable to control himself.

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despite his sincere and passionate love for Madame de Monnier

The Marquise on the other hand, behaved so well that she ended by putting her relations on the wrong scent and making them believe that she was in a fair way to forget Mirabeau. Thus she lulled their vigilance to sleep and succeeded in escaping from Dijon and joining Mirabeau on August the 24th at Verrières to which place he had returned on August the 13th.

The joy of the two lovers on meeting again was as exuberant and intense as their passion. 'My Gabriel' reiterated Sophie 'twas thee or death', and he carried away by the violence of his emotions believed he had never for one minute ceased to think of Sophie since he had first known her.

But the happiness of the pair was precarious in Switzerland, because it was easy to obtain an extradition order. Mirabeau explained this to his lady and as his wish was law on the 15th of September they both left Verrières, to repair to Holland. Here they installed themselves at Amsterdam and in spite of their small means their home was a nest of love and happiness. In order to earn his daily bread Mirabeau applied for work from the publishers and Sophie a host in herself undertook the housework revised his proofs gave Italian lessons and did all the sewing.

My adorable companion so wrote Mirabeau "was never so merry so courageous so attentive so equable and so tender as when we were poor. She embellished my life. Their love for each other made them forget that they could not satisfy their hunger nor dress as they used. A kiss given or received was their great pleasure and at that time both wished with all

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their hearts that this secluded life of love might last for ever.

But at Pontarlier, the Marquis de Monnier had set everything in motion to avenge his wrongs. He had brought an action against the fugitives and on the 10th of May, 1777, the public prosecutor of the *baillage de Pontarlier* gave the following judgment: For contempt of court the couple were condemned (1) in the case of Mirabeau, convicted of rape and abduction, to pay a fine of five thousand *livres*, forty thousand *livres* damages with costs and to lose his head. (2) Sophie, convicted of adultery, to be confined for the term of her natural life in the penitentiary at Besançon, where she was to be shaved and branded like the other inmates.

But at Amsterdam Mirabeau, in order to safeguard his liberty and that of his mistress, had taken every step to be made a "town citizen." He hoped that this title would render them both invulnerable to any outside influence. It did nothing of the sort. Mirabeau was made "citizen of Amsterdam" on the 14th of May, 1777, but Monsieur de Monnier obtained an extradition order against the guilty pair at the beginning of the following June. From this moment the situation of the two lovers became desperate. While neither of them would face their threatened misfortune and both clung to hope with the convulsive fever of the lost, Monsieur de Ruffey, Sophie's father learned, with growls of savage joy, that the couple could be arrested.

It was in the midst of the most intimate domestic happiness in their little home that the police sought them. The separation was heart-rending. Clasped

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in the closest embrace the two lovers refused to be parted. When Sophie was torn from Mirabeau's arms his emotion was so intense that it brought on a violent haemorrhage. The young woman staggered beneath the weight of her despair. Both of them wept, each strove to believe in the future, but to what could they look forward except prison or the cloister?

Sophie whose expectations of motherhood were obvious could not for this reason be taken to the reformatory at Besançon as the judgment of Pontardier had decided. She was interned under the name of Madame de Courvière in a house of correction in the Rue de Charonne at Paris.

As to Mirabeau on the 8th of June 1777 he was locked up in the dungeon of Vincennes. It was from this State prison that thanks to Monsieur le Noir, the chief constable, and his head-clerk, he was able to correspond with Sophie. Both were to recapture in this exchange of letters something of the delicious sensations and disturbing emotions of their days of happiness. Mirabeau's letters to Sophie are an odd mixture of sincerity and rhetoric. They overflow with love a love burning mad and intoxicating but are mixed with philosophy politics and ethics. In these letters we have a complete picture of Mirabeau's greatness and littleness his violent temperament, his bursts of passion his sensuality and his generosity too. One can understand how the deep devoted love of the unhappy recluse in the *Rue de Charonne* would be sustained comforted and stimulated by such letters.

On the 7th of January 1778 she gave birth to a girl who was registered under the name of Sophie Gabrielle

A MISTRESS OF MIRABEAU

daughter of Marie-Thérèse, Sophie de Ruffey, wife of Messire Claude, François, Marquis de Monnier. Thus this love-child had not the right to bear the name of its real father and its mother was not allowed to keep it. At the end of the first months it was taken from her and Madame de Monnier was transferred from Paris to the Convent of Sainte-Claire at Gien.

At Gien Sophie continued to live in the rapturous memory of her love. It was for this that she lived and it was from this that she still expected happiness. In the solitude of the convent she so worked upon her own heart and senses that she loved Mirabeau even more than she had loved him at Amsterdam. She wrote of it to him, and she also wrote, so that she might talk of him and of her passion, to a new friend whose acquaintance Mirabeau had made and to whom he had begun to make love at Vincennes where she was visiting her lover, one of his fellow prisoners. Mirabeau presently informed Madame de Monnier that this woman, Julie Danvers by name, was her rival. "I have found another soul worthy of your own", he wrote to Sophie, "and henceforward your sex for me will comprise two individuals."

In spite of this declaration the Marquise was not in the least jealous. She loved Mirabeau too well to think that she had anything to fear from him. "Celibacy will kill you!" she wrote. "I allow, I wish, I command you to have everything excepting that which can steal your heart", and when Mirabeau came out of Vincennes she wrote to Mademoiselle Danvers. "Get him to come to you, stop him from working, keep him for me so that he may live for the people worthy of him." Warm-hearted and in

A MISTRESS OF MIRABEAU

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notwithstanding her passionate love the Marquise had as yet no suspicion that in Mirabeau's affections there was nothing which resembled her own self abnegation. At this time all her desires hopes, and emotions were concentrated on her lover's promise to come and see her secretly at the convent of Gien as soon as he came out of Vincennes. Sophie prepared for this visit with tenderness fear and gratitude. The maid Victoire who waited on her was informed of the great event because Madame de Monnier could depend on her and because the mistress needed the servant's assistance to carry out her scheme successfully. Indeed, it was the servant who ventured to take the key of the garden gate from the abbess for the purpose of having a duplicate made which would enable them to open the gate to the beloved when he came. It was Victoire also who bought the felt slippers for the lover to wear in the convent in order to deaden the sound of his footsteps it was she again, who got in provisions when the longed for time arrived.

On the 15th of February 1781 Madame de Montier wrote to Mirabeau. Everything is ready for you. Oh how I look forward to seeing you! Mirabeau came at last on the 29th of May. Sophie was mad with delight and trembling with joy. Her lover managed to give her the impression that he shared her transports. Yet all the time he was contemplating a rupture and had been counting on this sojourn at the convent to prepare her whom he had loved so much and whose passion was more ardent than ever for the break. But consummate actor that he was he played the lover as successfully as ever. For five days he remained at the convent, hiding in the large *armoire*.

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whenever a noise, an office or a custom of the convent made him fear the advent of some individual from whom he must conceal himself. Sophie knew once more the joy of hope. She hoped that Mirabeau would often come again to see her and for a much longer time. But this visit was the only one which he paid to Gien. Mademoiselle Danvers took him away from Sophie de Monnier. She whom he called his "only soul", while he described the Marquise as his "other half", was the only one who inflamed him at this particular time. Then, too, he had enjoyed many a fleeting fancy as soon as he came out of Vincennes before going to Gien. Madame de Voillemain, Madame de Bussey-Dagoneau are but two of the most famous heroines of his fickle whim. In a word, the Comte de Mirabeau and the Marquise de Monnier were no longer in harmony, and Mirabeau was impatient to regain his liberty.

It was on the 7th of September, 1789, that Sophie de Monnier realized this and it was on the 9th of September that this great lover chose to die rather than to survive the love which she had placed so high. She took poison. And on her death-bed she who had suffered so much for her lover had not even the consolation of knowing that he loved her still and that he would mourn her as she would have loved to be mourned.

THE DAUGHTERS OF LOUIS XV

OF the nine children borne to Louis XV by Marie Leczinska seven were daughters and only two were sons. This lack of proportion is exactly what might have been expected at a Court where women from the very beginning of the reign occupied a position of importance due to the influence of such charming ladies as the Comtesse de Toulouse and Mademoiselle de Charolais¹. After 1741 until the death of Louis XV women always preponderated. They were the prime movers in the most important as well as in the most trivial events. Neither was this feminine power confined to the recognized favourites but was shared by a large number of other women. There was Madame d'Estrades capable of the strangest conspiracies. Madame de Mirepoix feverish in her efforts to make the King pay her enormous card debts. Madame de Marsan the terrible and bitter champion of the Jesuits. Madame de Tencin whose boundless ambition to direct the State made her stop at nothing. These are only a few of the women who contended for influence and power under the government of this King who never knew how to rule. What is more natural than to see such a King surrounded by girls rather than boys?

After the birth on the 14th of August 1727 of the first two Princesses who were twins Louise-Elizabeth,

¹ See the chapter on *Three Ladies at Supper*

THE DAUGHTERS OF LOUIS XV

the eldest, and Madame Henriette, there was a general presentiment that there would be many daughters in the Royal family.

This foreboding was not long in becoming a reality, for in the year 1737, the Queen already possessed seven daughters, the youngest of whom, *Marie-Louise*, was born in the July of that same year.¹

THE DAUGHTERS OF LOUIS XV

' King Papa But Louis was incapable of thwarting any of them to their faces (Of this characteristic Mercy d'Argenteau was one day to write to the Empress Maria Theresa ' His Majesty is a man who would rather tolerate offences in his children than make the slightest remonstrance at the time if he has anything on his mind he writes it ') The King yielded to *Madame Troisième* and so in Fleury's despite only four of Louis' daughters repaired to Fontevrault. These were Marie-Louise-Thérèse-Victoire, aged five, Philippe-Elisabeth Justine-Sophie, aged four, Marie-Thérèse-Félicité, aged two and Louise-Marie aged one year. The Princesses left Versailles in June 1738 just about the time when Louis began to make public his *liaison* with Madame de Mailly. So resigned was the King to this separation from his daughters that he did not return to Versailles from Rambouillet, where he was staying with the Comtesse de Toulouse to bid them goodbye. During the twelve years that the Princesses spent at Fontevrault neither Louis XV nor Marie Leczinska ever paid them a single visit. They did not even go when in September 1744 Marie-Thérèse-Félicité died there at the age of eight, a victim of imprudence.

It was not that the King and Queen did not love their children. Louis showed a great deal of affection for all the Princesses as long as they were with him. But directly they were far away their memory faded from his mind and heart, and, insensibly he allowed himself to be dominated by passion and sensuality. As to the Queen, her numerous confinements, which occurred at such short intervals, had so aged and weakened her that she had only preserved enough energy to save



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the King's soul. She was a passive and apathetic mother.

The Princesses, who departed from the Court in eight coaches and two chaises with twenty wagon-loads of luggage, arrived at Fontevrault after a journey lasting thirteen days. The Abbess, who was a Rochechouart-Mortemart took the trouble to receive them clad all in white and accompanied by four quite young girls. She desired that on their arrival the Royal children should be greeted by attractive faces, and colours which would please them.

Notwithstanding this attention on the part of the Abbess, the Princesses' life at Fontevrault was neither pleasant nor instructive. The nuns lacked the experience and probably also the knowledge which were necessary for the education of the Daughters of France. On several occasions the punishments which were inflicted reacted most deleteriously on their health. It would, however, be an exaggeration to believe what has been asserted by Madame Victoire, to wit, that the terrors and convulsions to which she and her sisters were subject had their origin in the long stations which the nuns forced them to make in the mortuary vaults of the Abbey. These stations cannot have been either so long or so frequent as Madame Victoire thought. The intense fears which shook Marie-Leczinska as a young Queen are a better explanation of these fits and terrors than Madame Victoire's statements. But none the less the fact remains that the Princesses were sent down into these mortuary vaults, since they had knowledge of their existence, and that such gloomy places could not but have a depressing and dangerous effect on youthful imaginations. It is also

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a fact that when Mesdames returned to the Court of France they were so ignorant that they could scarcely read or write Only music and dancing had been well taught at Fontevrault

The daughter of Louis XV who stands out boldly from among the others was brought up at the Court of Versailles Though merely the princess of a small principality she was an exceptional figure in her epoch She was keen, ambitious and enterprising untiring in her energies and passionately fond of her own people at a time when in the second half of the eighteenth century, it was rare to meet with anything among kings, princes and the great but selfishness, effeminacy and a complete lack of interest in politics. This eldest daughter of the King did not for a single instant despair of changing Europe to the advantage of her House, of imbuing everyone with a love for France and of making her son a prince worthy of his great French forefathers

Louise-Elisabeth showed her gifts from the very beginning of her marriage with the Infante, Don Philip, the third son of Philip V King of Spain and of his second wife, Elizabeth Farnese Their marriage took place in France by proxy on the 26th of August 1739 and was far from satisfying everybody The barrister Barbier wrote in his diary 'It seems extraordinary that the eldest Daughter of France is not marrying a crowned head' D Argenson expressed the opinion that this union was only agreed to because the idea was to make Don Philip King of the two Sicilies The Princess herself considered her destiny to be less glorious than she had the right to expect This little person, already very conscious of the

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magnitude of her double title of Frenchwoman and Daughter of France, thought that the title of queen would have suited her much better than that of wife of a prince without lands. This is what her large dark eyes, pent beneath thick eyebrows, said, and even her pouting mouth, which contracted into a scornful grimace when Don Philip's position was first discussed in her presence and when she was asked if she would not feel pleased to be called Infanta.

Notwithstanding those intensely expressive dark eyes, Louise-Elisabeth was not so pretty as her twin, the Princesse Henriette. Her nose was too short and too broad, her face rather too plump, her forehead too high and her complexion, which was too dark to be dazzling, was often blotchy. Occasionally her expression was dull and indolent, but usually she was vivacious and decided. It was said that the Princess knew how to exact obedience and to get her own way. In short, if Louise-Elisabeth was not actually lovely, she was, on the whole, an original, pleasing, *piquante* and intelligent personality.

If Louis XV had seen, unmoved, the departure of his four young daughters to Fontevrault in June, 1738, it was not without sorrow that he bade farewell in September, 1739, to his eldest daughter, aged twelve, when she left to journey to a foreign Court there to meet a prince, her husband, who was only a younger son. The King who entered the coach which bore his daughter away accompanied her for several miles and during the drive was unable to hide either his grief or his fears.

The Princess on her arrival at Madrid made a very good impression on her father-in-law, King Philip V,

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Despite the fact that she had been ill for a long time, she had a very good appetite. Her eyes were bright and she had a very pleasant smile. She was a very good-looking girl, with a gentle and kind expression.

Notwithstanding the fact that she had been ill for a long time, she had a very good appetite. Louis Philippe was very pleased to see the Princess Sophie. He thought she was too frail, but she was very good-looking. She had a very good smile and her eyes were very bright. He thought she was very good-looking. The Princess Sophie was very good-looking and had a very good smile. She was very good-looking and had a very good smile. In short, the Princess Sophie was not exactly frail, she was, on the whole, a very good-looking, good-natured and intelligent person.

If Louis XV had not married the daughter of his son, Louis Philippe, to Ferdinand in 1733, it was not until some time later that he made his first visit to September, 1753, to his eldest daughter and wife, when she left to journey to a foreign country there to meet a prince, her husband, who was only a younger son. The King who entered the coach which bore his daughter away accompanied her for several miles and during the drive was unable to hide either his grief or his fears.

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and only a moderate one on Queen Elizabeth Farnese, her mother-in law, who in any case was incapable of showing kindly feeling to a daughter in-law no matter what she might be, while the Infante Don Philip her husband, genuinely liked her. The marriage solemnized in France on August 26th was ratified by a magnificent ceremony on the 25th October, 1739, in the ancient church of Alcara de Henares and the young Princess was soon the *idol* of Madrid.

The first discordant note in the chorus of praise and general demonstration of affection which reached the Infanta, came from her mother in law Elizabeth Farnese having realized that she would most certainly never succeed in ruling her daughter in-law as she had been accustomed to rule her son conceived, after six months of peace, a furious anger and a violent enmity against the Princess. Her hostility was further intensified by the fact that France had neither turned to assist Spain against England nor to pay the Infanta's dowry.

Louise-Elisabeth remained as much of a French woman at Madrid as she had been at Versailles. It was to the Court of Versailles that she looked for support, suggestions and guidance. She wrote to the Dauphin an account of all the important events at the Court of Madrid and carried on a regular correspondence with her twin who was her favourite sister. As H. Sage¹ observes she wanted from her exile "to create a real influence for herself at Versailles". And she succeeded too for, in 1740 that is to say, only a few months after her marriage she had already gained for her cause

¹ Don Philippe de Bourbon Infante d'Espagne et Louise-Elisabeth de France

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ardent and influential relations and friends who, whether at Versailles or at Madrid, had promised to obtain for the young couple an establishment worthy of the birth of both In the first rank of these adherents was the affectionate and devoted Madame Henriette who, despite her sickness and habitual apathy, could rouse herself to strike a blow when her darling sister's interest was at stake. At such times her noble, pale face would acquire a little colour and this gentle girl, who was at everybody's service, would never have forgiven anyone who had tried to prevent her from interfering in the interests of her eldest sister Madame Adélaïde, too, although still very young, wanted to work for the Infanta, and so did the Dauphine Raphaëlle, Louis' son's first wife. The Noailles and the Maurepas plotted with the Queen on behalf of Louise-Elisabeth, while the French Ambassador at Madrid, Monseigneur Vauréal, Archbishop of Rheims, was so zealous in the Princess's cause as to be the subject for laughter and lampoons D'Argenson wrote of him in 1749 "It is accepted as a fact that this prelate wanted to whisper sweet nothings to Madame (the Infanta)."

The Infanta knew very well that she would become a power through her allies Elizabeth Farnese, her mother-in-law, was well aware of it too So, pricked by ambition, the one for her son, the other for her husband, these two women, who continued to have an antipathy for each other, became genuinely reconciled and joined forces with the object of gaining a kingdom or a position of authority for Don Philip

The Prince on whose account all these negotiations, intrigues and diplomatic moves were being made had

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nothing of his mother's arrogant, fiery, crafty disposition, nor anything of his wife's tenacity or ambition. He was a tall slim youth with a long delicate face, thin lips and a broad high forehead who despite his pleasant expression had at first sight looked rather a nincompoop to his young wife. But soon Louise-Elisabeth discovered that notwithstanding his round dull eyes his lack of vivacity and his want of pronounced personality Don Philip could be good and kind, quietly dignified and above all affectionate, in the way she liked. From that moment she felt strongly attracted to and became genuinely fond of him. Nevertheless she always treated him as a boy much younger than herself although he was her senior by eight years. The husband and wife were not to enjoy their first intimacy for long. During the last days of 1741 the Infante was obliged to leave his spouse to take over the command of the Franco-Spanish armies against Sardinia, just at the time too when she had made him the father of a daughter (the 31st of December 1741). The friends of Don Philip and he himself hoped that through this war he would succeed in securing for himself the possession of one of the duchies of Northern Italy. Elizabeth Farnese saw in it in addition a means to prevent the Infanta from gaining too much influence over her husband. This jealous mother could not resign herself to occupying second place in her son's heart. At all costs Louise Elisabeth must not be allowed to supplant her in his affections. The best way to defend her so-called maternal rights appeared to lie in the separation of husband and wife. That is the reason why for eight years Elizabeth Farnese neglected no intrigue, artifice

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ruse or measure to prevent the young people from meeting and to keep Don Philip in camp. At this time the mother had already formed the habit of writing to her son in cipher. The dominant note of anxiety running through this correspondence,¹ which was to continue until the death of Louise-Elisabeth, was based on the Prince's feelings towards his wife "I want to know if you love .: (the sign which Elizabeth Farnese used to denote her daughter-in-law when writing to her son) Tell me the truth!" the Queen of Spain implored. One feels that she always hoped for a reply in the negative, which however never came, for de Luynes, writing with full knowledge of the subject on the 3rd of April, 1749, observes: "Although the Prince at twenty-eight is as much of a child as he was at fourteen or fifteen, he has, nevertheless, an affectionate regard for the Infanta."

But Don Philip fought bravely with his armies, sometimes even with a fire which was characteristic of a Frenchman. His successes, however, were mixed with reverses. Thus it was that his triumphal entry into Turin (the 19th of December, 1745) was lessened by the defeat which he sustained at Placentia on the 19th of June, 1746. In spite of everything, the Peace was to be entirely in his favour; for, from the moment when he began to fight against Austria, the Princess, his wife, turned to advantage the diplomatic gifts with which she was endowed.

Her knowledge of affairs and politics was increased by her daily contact with so able and crafty a politician

¹ A few files of these letters were discovered by Charles Nisard in 1877 in an old cardboard box in the archives at Parma. The remainder appear to have been lost.

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correspondence which the Queen Dowager carried on against her with her son and of which the young Princess was totally unaware. The Prince did no more than suffer this correspondence, but it made him very unhappy, for he had neither the courage to refuse it nor to disclose it to his wife. In order to rid herself entirely of this detested mother in law, Louise-Elisabeth insisted on a substantial income. But who was going to pay it? If it was to be furnished by Spain alone the Infante and Infanta would once again fall under the heavy yoke of that country. The only means of avoiding this misfortune was to induce Louis XV to contribute to the allowance granted to Don Philip. The Infanta left Madrid firmly convinced that she would succeed in gaining her ends.

She arrived at Versailles on the 31st of December 1748. Great was her family's joy on seeing her again especially that of the King and Madame Henriette and the Dauphin. Louis met her at Villeroy the Dauphin and Madame Henrietta went as far as Choisy in order to meet her all the sooner. Marie Leczinska more apathetic awaited her at Versailles. Louise-Elisabeth arrived with her *camerara mayor* the Marquise de Leyde (according to d'Argenson 'the wickedest creature that ever was') a secretary of state the Duc de Monteillano as major domo-in-chief ('a mean despicable slovenly fellow remarks the same d'Argenson) and three maids-of-honour. But there was nothing rich or luxurious about this suite. The Princess herself possessed only what was indispensable. At Versailles it was claimed that she returned to France with the same clothes that she had taken away with her more than nine

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years earlier. This lack of pomp and elegance did not appear to worry the Infanta at all, at least not for the moment. All she wanted was to succeed in her mission. So she scarcely ever left her father, who, several times during the day, and even at night, repaired to the Infanta's apartments by a little private staircase to talk business and to enjoy the pleasure of seeing her again. The friendship between the King and his daughter was so complete as to cause Madame de Pompadour offence. The favourite asked herself anxiously if the power which she desired to keep at all costs might not pass into the hands of this Princess who assimilated ideas and diverse projects so easily, whose strength of mind astonished all who came in contact with her, and who was practical, clever, quick and healthy. Louise-Elisabeth did not desire this power, but she succeeded in obtaining under seal of the greatest secrecy a grant of two hundred thousand francs for the Duke of Parma. Thus the object of her journey was magnificently attained. It has even been said that when she left Versailles on the 18th of October, 1749, after several times postponing her departure for a great many weeks, the Infanta took back with her a new trousseau and ever so many gowns. D'Argenson who, it is true, did not like her, claimed that her journey had cost the State twelve hundred thousand *livres*.

Louise-Elisabeth's departure caused intense sorrow at the Court. It made Madame Henriette ill and the Dauphin fairly howled with grief. Louis was gloomy for several days and Marie Leczinska shed a few tears. But the Princess continued on her way to Parma, where she arrived in December. Her husband

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welcomed her in a perfect transport of happiness while the people greeted her with acclamation and held the most joyous and enthusiastic demonstrations in her honour. Louise-Elisabeth was accompanied by a group of French people whose affection she had been able to gain at Versailles and who were going to help and support her in the work of spreading throughout the principality that love and admiration of France which possessed her soul.

Don Philip was only provisionally installed at Parma for before leaving the duchy, Don Carlos his eldest brother had removed everything he could from the palace and borne it off to Naples—furniture hangings, decorations and even the grand staircase of marble had been torn from their original setting to embellish the residential palace of Don Carlos. For this reason a great deal of money had to be spent to make the palace at Parma habitable. And even so, this palace still lacked charm for it was surrounded by walls and had neither gardens nor park. The Infanta determined to alter the whole arrangement and plan. She did not mind what she spent in order to introduce something of the luxury and art which she loved at Versailles. And hardly were these alterations begun than she organized innumerable brilliant *fêtes* at the ducal palace. Six times a week there was opera the Court arranged picturesque and delightful trips to Colonna the ducal residence in lower Parma and to the Palace of Piacenza, the most fascinating of Don Philip's homes. The Princess also wished to have troops notwithstanding that her husband's principality was under the protection of France and Spain and soon the presence of one hundred and fifty

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carbineers and a regiment of cuirassiers enhanced the prestige of Don Philip's throne. Unfortunately such expenses imposed a burden on the principality's budget which it was unable to support. To meet all these obligations the Infanta had no more than the four hundred thousand *livres* furnished by Spain, four hundred thousand *livres* derived from a priory and thirty thousand *livres* which he got from his estate in the Spanish La Manche. With such a meagre income it was impossible to continue so grandiose a life. From Spain Elizabeth Farnese, in her secret correspondence, encouraged Don Philip's resistance to his wife's schemes, both with regard to her plans for *fêtes* and her desire to make French influence predominant at Parma. It is true that on her side the daughter-in-law was resolute in resisting the ardent wish of Elizabeth Farnese to come and install herself in the principality. Louise-Elisabeth knew very well that if the Queen-Dowager were to come and live with her son, her strong will and her craftiness would very quickly get the better of anything that she herself might display of energy and authority. She would thus speedily gain first place at Parma and this the Infanta would not have at any price.

She consented therefore to change her style of living at Court. Soon, Don Philip and his wife were obliged to dine *tête-à-tête* and to give up all their brilliant *fêtes*. The Infante, in any case, hardly suffered from the change. He loved hunting the deer without ceremony, and playing French music to himself as soon as it was daylight.

The Infanta, no longer able to organize brilliant

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entertainments took up her political work again with fresh zest and vigour. The Duke never negotiated any business without consulting her and the Princess never made a decision without first drawing inspiration from France. Nearly all the high dignitaries came from France and French was the common language of the palace even in the case of Don Philip.

But this French influence, which the Infanta sought by every means to extend and intensify excited the jealousy of the Italians. The peninsula began to form an Italian party and within the principality natives and Spaniards alike unceasingly and furiously opposed everything French. Race antagonism was carried to such a pitch that it was possible for people to believe rightly or wrongly that France's Chief Minister at Parma had been poisoned by Madame de Leyde (1750). This woman reproached him not only for being a Frenchman but also for having denounced to the Infante and Infanta her shameless plundering of the duchy. Crossol Maulevrier's successor went mad (1754) mad for love of the Infanta claims D'Argenson.

In the interval between these two deaths the Infanta experienced on the 20th of January 1751 what was perhaps the greatest happiness of her life when she gave birth to a son Ferdinand Philippe-Louis. This Princess who was the most excellent of mothers had passionately desired a son although she was devoted to her daughter from whom she had never wanted to be separated even during her busy mission to France. At the end of this same year (1751) in the month of November the Infanta gave birth to her third and last child the Princess Louise-Marie-Thérèse.

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But hardly had a few months gone by than Louise-Elisabeth forfeited to fate part of her maternal joys through a domestic sorrow. At Versailles, Henriette, her well-loved twin, had suddenly fallen hopelessly ill. It was in February, 1752, on an intensely cold day, with a stinging wind, the King came to ask his daughter Henriette to accompany him on a sledge-ride. The Princess was tired that day ; but the King's invitation was too pleasant and too flattering for Henriette to dream of not complying. So she departed in the sleigh with his Majesty ; she had barely been half-an-hour in the open air when she was already shivering from head to foot, notwithstanding her furs. On her return to the Court the delicate Princess, always pale at the best of times, was livid, and two days later (the 10th of February) the death agony began. She died on the following day, while the Royal Family, overwhelmed, remained in a state of stupefaction over the rapidity of the illness. Thus Henriette passed away at the age of twenty-four, leaving behind her nothing but regrets and affection. Loving and intensely loyal to those for whom she had an affection, musical and artistic, gentle and melancholy, even a little lymphatic, she had never made any enemies.

On her death the King ordered all spectacles and amusements to be stopped, although Carnival was at its height. It was also his wish that the young Princess's funeral should be marked by the highest honours. The violence of his paternal grief found a solace in the tokens of affection and honour given to the dear remains. It was decided that the Princess's heart should be conveyed to the Abbey of Val-de-Grâce.

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there to be preserved while her body was to rest by the side of her ancestors in the vaults of Saint Denis. The funeral procession started from the Tuileries and on the long road which separated the Tuileries from the Cathedral, Louis desired that the manifestations of grief and sympathy should be multiplied. So the remains of the regretted Princess had to be removed from Versailles to the Tuileries. The King could not bring himself to allow them to be treated as a corpse. The deceased was clothed in one of her loveliest dresses seated in a coach to give her the appearance of being alive and conveyed to Paris at a gallop. At Saint Denis a magnificent catafalque in white pink and sea-green was erected surrounded by exotic blooms. But the funeral was not what the King had anticipated. Instead of the tears and testimonies of affection for which he had wished indecent scenes took place. The people drank, laughed and amused themselves while the Court grieved. Royalty had lost too much of its prestige and of its right to the nation's recognition to expect its subjects to associate themselves in the mass with its sorrows and exhibition of sadness.

At Parma the Infanta lived through all the hours of anguish which the illness and death of Madame Henriette inflicted on her family. Ever since the fatal moment she had had but one desire to go with Don Philip to Versailles there to mingle her tears with those of the King, the Queen, the Dauphin and the Princesses. But it proved so difficult for the Duke to leave the principality that in the end the Duchess had to depart alone (August 1752).

This journey like the previous one was also to serve

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the interests of her House The Princess took with her to Versailles the Duc de Noailles, who was whole-heartedly devoted to the interests of the Infanta and her husband, and who was thoroughly acquainted with the financial stress of their circumstances Thanks to his skill in managing all parties and of ingratiating himself with them without, however, intriguing (whatever else may have been said of him), Louise-Elisabeth was able to interest Louis XV and his minister in the report which he wrote on the situation existing in the duchy of Parma This report pointed out, among other things, that the situation in Don Philip's states was "of the gloomiest, and insupportable" The Duke was despatched with a special letter of introduction to the Duc du Duras, the French Ambassador at Madrid, who informed the King of Spain, Ferdinand VI, that France was ready to share the expenses of the Duchy of Parma with Spain, if the latter would guarantee her rights of tutelage and protectorate equal to her own The negotiations, opened in January, 1753, dragged on Spain did not wish to give up any of her prerogatives, but, from Versailles, the Infanta set her Spanish friends to work, while she on her part zealously supported her cause at the French Court Her energy and intelligence aided France in carrying the day in August, 1753 Henceforward, the rôle (important no doubt but, nevertheless, naturally covert), which France had played at Parma ever since Don Philip had been established in the duchy, was transformed into a recognized, legal right One can understand the *Président Hénault* singing with a certain amount of enthusiasm, the praises of a princess who was able to contribute her share towards such a success

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Her lively wit makes all things gay
And with a word she charms away
Our hearts into her hands
What bids us love this lady say?
'Tis Reason's self commands¹

Thanks to the Franco-Spanish negotiations of 1753 the Infante and Infanta of Parma had now an annual revenue of two hundred and twenty five thousand *francs* paid by the Powers two millions in taxes and a further guarantee of supplementary assistance by France. Not until these arrangements were definitely settled did Louise-Elisabeth with a heart full of sorrow leave France (October 1753) to return once more to Parma.

The first act of the Royal pair after the Duchess's return was to select the Frenchman Dutillot to administer the principality. The appointment of this enthusiastic supporter of Louise-Elisabeth's policy to the post of Chief Minister marked France's moral conquest of Parma. Henceforward the Princess, sure of being aided and understood by Don Philip's minister, was able to devote herself with all the strength of her passionate and persevering nature to the realization of the three projects which lay so near to her heart.

These projects were firstly to free the government of Parma from Spanish tutelage next, to give to the young Prince her son in whom all her political ambitions were centred as excellent an education as possible. Louise-Elisabeth was equally anxious to secure to the Prince the succession to the duchy of

¹ *Son esprit sait tout animer
Un mot lui suffit pour charmer
On l'aime!
Qui nous la fait aimer?
La raison même!*

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Parma and its dependencies. She even strove to obtain for him, with France's support, an important European throne. Lastly, the Princess was already thinking of her daughters' futures, for she wished them to make brilliant matches.

It was to achieve these three great aims that, in August, 1757, the Infanta set out once more for Versailles. She knew from the experience of her former visits that her presence at her father's Court was the most effective means of obtaining from him what she wanted. But, even from Parma, the Princess had taken her part in the political pre-occupations of the French Court and was fully acquainted with its decisions. Babiole's negotiations and the Treaty of Versailles on the 1st of May, 1756, which upset France's alliances by making an ally of that very same Austria which had been her enemy in the previous war, and an adversary of the very same Prussia which had fought on her side down to 1748, were, perhaps, due as much or even more to Louise-Elisabeth's influence than to that of Madame de Pompadour. Indeed, Louise-Elisabeth looked to Austria for her children's fortune, while she feared Spain. Consequently, nothing was as advantageous to herself as a Franco-Austrian Alliance.

The possibility of forming a kingdom for Don Philip out of the Netherlands had been under consideration at Versailles since 1756. This scheme entailed the abandonment of the defence of Spanish interests in Flanders. But Louis XV and his ministers thought that it would be more profitable to set up a vassal state with a friend at its head, than to support a nation in which they had but limited confidence. In addition, the King was endeavouring to place "in a stronger

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and more suitable position, as Bernis has written that particular Bourbon who after his own direct male issue was dearest to him.

At the same time, this Franco-Austrian alliance made Don Philip completely secure on his present throne, for it was not 'by force' as had been the case in 1748 that Austria ceded Parma, but of her own free will to satisfy France her ally and friend. Henceforth Ferdinand VI could die without the Infante fearing that the King's death would kindle 'a conflagration in the peninsula. Thus the policy which gratified the favourite¹ was much the most advantageous to the House of Parma. It was from this community of interests and schemes that was born the *rapprochement* between the Infanta and Madame de Pompadour which by some has been written down against the Princess as a real crime.

It is certainly painful to see a daughter making herself the intimate of her father's mistress. But in her political fervour the Infanta purposely forgot La Pompadour's relations with the King in order that she might remember nothing but her power in the government. In making common cause with her Louise Elisabeth multiplied her House's chances of success had she held aloof she would only have spoiled her own cause. So husband and wife cultivated a friendship with the powerful Marquise and both exchanged exceedingly cordial letters with her. The question of the Austrian alliance was not the only one which brought the King's daughter and the favourite together. Both of them took an interest in Choiseul and both thrust him into the foreground. It was the

¹ See the chapter on *Madame de Pompadour*.

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Infanta who asked that he might be made Ambassador at Vienna, and Madame de Pompadour also tried to get him the appointment. For the rest, the Duchess's patronage of Choiseul occasioned many an outburst of temper on the part of Bernis, who vied with Choiseul to be first in the Princess's favour.

Louise-Elisabeth arrived at Versailles on the 3rd of September, 1757 Two days later she was writing the first of that long series of letters in which she gives Don Philip at once an account of all her acts, negotiations, hopes and successes, as of all the intentions and actions of Louis' Government. The questions which most persistently recur in this voluminous and varied correspondence are four or five in number. First, that of the kingdom of the Netherlands, which Austria was willing to cede to Don Philip on condition that she herself might take the whole of Silesia from Prussia Next, the Princess repeatedly returns to the difficulties in connection with governing the duchy and gives her husband much and varied advice She also often speaks of the joy it will be to be released from the tutelage of Spain "We shall not be happy until we get rid of them ! This sentiment is more human than Christian I am not sufficiently good to resist it ! " (November 7th, 1757) Lastly, we see her ever pre-occupied with the disastrous events of that distressing Seven Years' War. But she was determined to rise superior to the bad news, to show good temper or resignation in order to comfort Don Philip "For the present we must submit and try to make the best of it, and for the future, however remote, yet for the sake of our children, we must go on toiling . . ." (March 17th, 1758).

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Another time she wrote 'It seems to me dangerous to show that one despairs of everything'

Nevertheless this fine attitude was unsuccessful in averting the fate of the House of Parma. It suffered the most disastrous blow by the accession to power of that same Choiseul who as Ambassador (December 1758) had been the Infanta's protégé. The new Minister with the object of stopping France's defeats wanted to form an alliance with Spain. But the latter seemed in no wise desirous of uniting with France. So in order to induce her Choiseul bade Don Carlos the eldest son of the Queen Dowager to have no more anxiety with regard to the Treaty of 1748, by which Don Philip received the two Sicilies in the event of Don Carlos mounting the throne of Spain. Whatever happened Don Carlos son should keep the kingdom of the two Sicilies to the prejudice of Don Philip. In making these propositions Choiseul was already laying the first foundation of an *entente* between all the Bourbons which was one day to end in the Family Compact. For the moment Spain would not allow herself to be won over but Choiseul's offers thrived and it was they which inspired the friendly treaty signed between Spain and Austria on the 3rd of October 1759. By this treaty the kingdom of Naples was given to Don Carlos second son and all Don Philip's rights to this kingdom were ignored.

In spite of these negotiations the Infanta who was worried by the thought of her son surrounded by vulgar and mean people at Parma had preserved sufficient independence of mind to choose to the great anger of the Jesuits the philosopher Condillac as his tutor.

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But the news of Austria's treaty with Spain and the knowledge of its clauses were a terrible blow to the Duchess. This tremendous disappointment upset her whole organism, overtaxed by the intense and incessant work of several years. She became suddenly overwhelmed by fatigue, and weary and incapacitated. This Princess, who for months had hardly slept from want of repose, whose brain was so full that many a time she felt it would burst, was ready to fall a victim to the first malady which might attack her. This malady was small-pox, which had raged almost permanently at Versailles ever since the *Grand Monarch* had had the soil turned up for the purpose of laying pipes to bring the waters of Marly to the palace.

It was towards the middle of November, 1759, that the Princess began to complain of her health. On the 19th of November, she wrote to her husband : "If my head is as bad to-morrow, it won't be my fault if I am not bled ; but you need not worry, it is nothing at all. Adieu, my Heart, I love you, as you know, and embrace you in proportion."

The next day the Infanta was much worse and she was never again to write to Don Philip or anyone else. She died at Versailles on the 6th of December, mourned by her family even more bitterly than Madame Henriette.

A woman of sense and devotion, a Princess endowed with a rare energy, with a sound judgment and a practical mind, Louise-Elisabeth of Parma never shirked any fatigue or work which could serve the cause of her relations. She has been reproached for being ambitious, but her ambition was for those whom she loved and never for her own gratification. On her

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death-bed she left a letter for her tiny son which is a kind of moral testament Reading it one is conscious of the supreme effort made by the mother who before leaving the world wished to impregnate the heart of her child with her own great love I am a French-woman, my son Love France my son she is the source of your origin, thus you owe her of yourself respect and deference. The strength of your affection for France will be the measure of your greatness if you become great of yourself, with her you will be greater still

The work of Louise-Elisabeth survived her and added to her fame after her death Parma was the *rendezvous* of celebrated artists Bodoni Venini de Rossi Meillot Payol the archaeologist Caylus and Paciandi *père* the antiquary An Academy of Fine-Arts was founded there as well as a magnificent library The son whom she had loved so dearly ruled over the duchy till his death which occurred in 1802 and her daughters made the grand marriages which Louise-Elisabeth had wished The eldest married in October 1760 the Archduke Joseph who became Emperor The Empress Maria Theresa her mother in-law called her the incomparable Archduchess Louise-Marie-Thérèse the youngest child of the Infanta and Don Philip married in 1765 the Prince of the Asturias the future King of Spain Unfortunately the life of this princess was not reminiscent of her mother's behaviour her name was sadly associated with that of de Godoy

There now remained only four of Louis XV's daughters at the Court These were Madame Adelalte Madame Victoire (Marie Louise Thérèse) Madame Sophie

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(Philippe-Elisabeth-Justine), and Madame Louise-Marie.

Madame Victoire had returned to Versailles on the 24th of March, 1748. Profoundly bored with her life at Fontevrault, she determined, with the confidence of her fifteen years, to write to "King-Papa" to entreat him to let her return home. Louis had hesitated for a little while ; but at the end of a fortnight he appointed three maids-of-honour to attend Madame Victoire and despatched the Duchesse de Duras to Fontevrault to fetch her back. He himself, accompanied by the Dauphin, went as far as Sceaux to meet her. The King was delighted to see Madame Victoire. So, too, was the Queen when she saw her several hours later. Madame *Quatrième* was extremely pretty ; her beautiful, tender, soft brown eyes, fresh complexion, *naïve* air and a bright smile gave the impression of happiness and health, which, together with her desire to please, radiated from her whole personality. Graceful in her movements, lively in her conversation, which only lacked *finesse* and wit, voluptuous in her expression, Madame Victoire was charming, and though she might have been accused of being a little too fat, as she was rather tall, this unfortunate tendency was scarcely noticeable.

The young Princess showed complete self-assurance, entirely free from any timidity, in her attitude towards the King and Queen, especially towards the King. Indeed, Louis XV's daughters were always more at ease with their father than with their mother ; the Queen never heard of their little worries or their griefs excepting through the King.

In November, 1750, Madame Sophie and Madame

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Louise joined their sisters at the Court. None of them had anything which recalled Madame Victoire's beauty. Madame Sophie tall certainly, possessed no other physical gift, her mouth was a straight line her chin long and her expression vacuous and furtive. Vulgar in appearance with awkward manners she was unwholesomely shy and timorous. When a storm burst her fright amounted to terror. She who was naturally haughty became at such times familiar with and affable to everybody. She would have given to those about her all that she possessed in the hope of appeasing the divine wrath. Madame Campan writes "I have never met anyone who looked so scared she walked at an extremely rapid pace, and in making her acknowledgments to those who made way for her, in order to avoid looking at them she adopted the habit of glancing sideways like a hare. This Princess was so excessively shy that one could meet her every day for years without hearing her utter a single word. She was neither intelligent nor amusing.

Madame Louise had no beauty either but while her sister Sophie was tall and retiring Madame Louise was small lively intelligent talkative in fact too voluble on subjects in which she was deeply interested. With a mind both discerning and practical she would have been caustic, mordant and scornful if the nuns of Fontevrault and Madame de Soulages in particular, who was especially attached to her person had not laboured hard to subdue her pride and modify her qualities. Am I not the daughter of your King? exclaimed the haughty little Princess to one of her women who was not sufficiently humble to please her — And I Madame am I not the daughter of your

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God?" bravely replied the waiting-woman, under Madame de Soulanges's inspiration.

Another day Madame Louise tried to make the ladies of Fontevrault comply with the custom of the Court which required everyone to rise when a member of the Royal Family drank. "Stand, ladies", cried the little girl, "Louise drinks!"—"Remain seated", quietly rejoined Madame de Soulanges.

Notwithstanding these exhibitions of her masterful will, Madame Louise was feeble and puny. She was the sad flower of winter, of a love that was dead before the child's birth. One of the Queen's friends, the Duc de Luynes, observes: "Madame Louise's head was a little too big for her body" The curvature of the spine, which later, the Princess called her "hump", was by no means the result of a so-called accident at Fontevrault, but due to her weak constitution.

The education of the two Princesses had been so neglected at the Abbey that when they returned to the Court they hardly knew how to read or write.

Madame Adélaïde dominated the four sisters by the force of her will, by an unusually vivid imagination, by the activity of her combative mind, and by her need to command which caused the Duc de Croÿ et de Martange to remark "Madame Adélaïde had a small head into which no large idea entered, and yet it was this small head and not her heart, which ruled everything around her" Her physique also contributed to form her original and strong personality. She had "just missed being a boy", with her masculine manners and bass voice. For a year or two, but not longer, she shone with a striking and disturbing beauty of the Bourbon type characterized by a rare

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elegance At this period she resembled Hennins portrait which depicts her with large dark eyes at once passionate and soft There was something uncanny about her some slight mental derangement but her expression remained languid and sweet

- This portrait is very different from the one which Madame Labille-Guérard painted of her in 1787 that is to say when Madame Adélaïde was fifty five. On this canvas *Madame Troisième* has preserved nothing of her ephemeral beauty She is as the Comtesse de Boigne has said Big withered with her pleated violet-coloured dress her butterfly-shaped cap and two large teeth the only ones she had left At this period she was truly ugly Her complexion was blotchy her nose red her nature crabbed and more imperious each day her violent fits of rage exceedingly frequent All her life Madame Adélaïde was completely lacking in balance She would pass abruptly from gaiety to sadness or anger and indulged in the most weird fancies At the age of eleven aided by a little *valet* she tried to enter the Army in order to kill Englishmen She was familiar with the story of Judith and Holofernes and proposed to imitate the courageous Jewess's action. Another time some years later she fell in love with a handsome life-guardsman while watching him perform his military duties As impulsive as she was ardent Madame Adélaïde sent a costly snuff box to the object of her passion as soon as she was sure of her heart's transports On the lid of the present she wrote in her own hand You will treasure this soon you shall be informed from whose hand it comes The young man acquainted his captain the Duc d'Ayen

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with the incident in order to ask his advice as to the course he should pursue. The Duc d'Ayen related the adventure to Louis XV, who adored anecdotes and gossip. After he had heard the story the King asked to see the snuff-box. No sooner was it in his hands than he recognized his daughter Adelaïde's handwriting on the lid. Louis immediately hastened to grant an annual pension of four thousand louis to the handsome life-guardsman, but under the express condition that he should "at once remove to some place far from the Court and remain there for a very long time". Notwithstanding her eccentricities and bold conduct, it would be unjust and criminal to pay the slightest attention to the calumnious charges of incest which it has been sought to bring against Madame Adelaïde and two of her sisters, Mesdames Henriette and Victoire. There is not the smallest foundation of truth in these accusations.

The Princesses' establishments were divided into two; one for the elder and one for the younger ones. In spite of this simplification d'Argenson complained at one time that the expenditure for Mesdames amounted to seven million francs. This was because very early the daughters of Louis XV were allowed to take part in all the *fêtes* and to organize all the entertainments which their imagination could suggest. Those of them who never went to Fontevrault appeared for the first time at the Opera with their father in January, 1744. In the adjoining box were Madame de Châteauroux¹ and one of her sisters Madame Henriette and Madame Adelaïde hunted with the King five days a week from the beginning of 1746.

¹ See the chapter on the *Duchesse de Châteauroux*.

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The masquerades the balls, the evening fêtes of all kinds increased in expense and luxury in the *appartements* of Mesdames and the Dauphin even before the Infanta's marriage

When the Princesses' tastes changed when the all powerful influence of the Dauphin urged them towards less blatant pleasures such as painting and music, Mesdames continued to spend more than was necessary by reason of their great love of good living. They ate at all hours of the day and kept a quantity of eatables in their *appartement*. These consisted of a great variety of Bologna sausages, ragoûts, sweetmeats of every sort and the generous wines of Spain. Without a doubt Madame Victoire's great love for all these excellent things contributed to develop her *enbon point* to an extreme degree and to spoil her beauty. Madame Sophie's predilection for these comestibles is not unfamiliar in the nickname of *Graille* (scrap) which her father gave her. Those of *Loque* (Dud) and *Chiffe* (Rag) with which he afflicted Madame Adelaïde and Madame Louise respectively are less comprehensible.

In their second as in their first style of living Mesdames were entirely free to follow their tastes and caprices without the King or anyone at the Court exercising any constraint or supervision over their behaviour or decisions. At this particular period they refused to receive or to speak to anyone who did not belong to their little set and Louis XV never bothered about their peculiarities. Uniting themselves with the Queen and the Dauphin they supported the clergy's resistance to the acts of the ministers, encouraged the refusal of the sacrament to those Catholics who did not

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accept the bull *Ubi Genitus* and endeavoured to get Parliament's decrees quashed by the Court.

In July, 1761, Madame Adélaïde accompanied Madame Victoire to Lorraine to take the waters, for the excesses of the table had seriously impaired the health of Louis XV's prettiest daughter. The two Princesses were absent for four months. It was during this visit of their elder sisters that Madame Sophie and Madame Louise went to Paris for the first time. These changes were but the prelude to the new importance which Mesdames were about to have at their father's Court. Indeed, Louis at this time not only did not criticise his daughters' behaviour, but he even relied upon their opinion and advice in making his decisions. Madame Adélaïde especially inspired him with confidence and gave him a sense of security by her firm and rapid resolutions. The King gave her the famous *appartement* of the Comtesse de Toulouse¹ which enabled the Princess to hold communication with her father by day and night. Madame Adélaïde, proud of her growing favour, treated her three sisters more than ever as veritable inferiors, whose sole duty was to obey her suggestions. But she herself, dominated by the Archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont and his *entourage*, whispered into the King's ear nothing but that prelate's desires. Thus it may well have been the Archbishop who inspired Madame Adélaïde to make attempts to get Louis to marry the young widow of the Prince de Lamballe. But, on Madame Dubarry's arrival at the Court (1764), the Princess's rôle came to an end until the King's last illness. Madame Adélaïde, in spite of

¹ See the chapter on *Three Ladies at Supper*.

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her grand airs her fits of temper and violent passions was obliged to give up her *appartement* to the favourite, and her dissatisfaction had no political consequences

What were Madame Louise's feelings at this juncture she who perhaps, of all the four sisters was the most intelligent? She had always found it extremely painful to be dominated by Madame Adelalde, but to be at the same time a cipher at the Court forced to submit to her elder sister must have been absolutely insupportable. Madame Louise was incapable of becoming resigned to the soft, innocent and easy life of Madame Victoire. Of a fiery and passionate disposition she was to be seen a short time after her return to the Court feverishly indulging in violent exercise. Now that the passage of years and disappointment and bitterness had saddened her the Princess thought a great deal became overstrained and arrived at the idea that it was only by withdrawing from the world that she would obtain the two things on which she had set her heart the King's conversion and the triumph of the Jesuits, who had been expelled by Choiseul's request on the 26th of November 1764. Madame Louise was so convinced of the Jesuits good claim and of the benefit they had been to France that she was ready to do anything to serve their cause. If she had been Louis XV's eldest daughter and beautiful it is possible that she would never have thought of the cloister and it seems an exaggeration to say By the side of her three surviving sisters the Carmelite stood out as a heroine.¹ But being what she was circumstances prevented her

¹ Strinsky *Mémoires de France Filles de Louis XV*

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from playing a rôle at the Court, where, moreover, her physique procured for her nothing but mortification and vexations, so she was ready to make any sacrifice to attain her ends

The Princess, after having mourned, with her sisters, the death of the Dauphin (December the 20th, 1765), and that of the Queen (June the 24th, 1768) begged Monsieur de Beaumont to speak to the King of her vocation and of her desire to enter the Carmel of Saint-Denis. The King thought the matter over before giving his answer, and, on the 16th of February, 1770, announced that he would not oppose his daughter's wish. It was in the month of April that Madame "Dermière" left the Court, accompanied in her coach by only one maid-of-honour and an equerry. In Holy Week the whole Royal Family paid her a visit at Saint-Denis. On the 10th of September, 1770, at a gorgeous ceremony over which the Papal Nuncio presided and which was enhanced by the presence of the King, the Princes and the Princesses, Madame Louise, magnificently attired in white satin and decked out in more than a million's worth of diamonds, exchanged her title of Daughter of France for that of Sister Thérèse of Saint-Augustine. She desired that her cell should be even more bare than that of the other Carmelites.

The act of renunciation which the youngest daughter of Louis XV had just accomplished at the age of thirty-three, made a new personage of her. Sister Thérèse of Saint-Augustine was now much greater than her sisters. She had become the first Carmelite of the Christian world to whom the King, the Princes, Mesdames de France, the ministers, the ambassadors, the bishops and the archbishops came to seek light and counsel.

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Her influence asserted itself immediately in the question of the Dauphin's marriage which had taken place on the 16th of May 1770. Sister Thérèse of Saint-Augustine in common with Louis' other daughters had strongly disapproved of her nephew's marriage with an Austrian. Moreover this marriage had been concluded by Choiseul the enemy of the Jesuits and consequently of Mesdames. It needed nothing more to make the young Dauphine antipathetic to her aunts however charming she might be, for Mesdames were jealous of the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette at first sight and of the influence which she would be able to exert over the King and the Dauphin. They made a feint of receiving her well but neglected no opportunity of doing her an injury. In this unfair and dark struggle Sister Thérèse of Saint-Augustine was so bitter and so persistent that Marie-Antoinette could not forbear exclaiming She is indeed the most scheming little Carmelite in France! The Princesses lamentable behaviour towards the young Dauphine made them very unpopular and only her habit saved Sister Thérèse from being included in this unpopularity.

The heroic hour of Louis XV's three daughters struck when the King fell ill. As soon as Mesdames Adélaïde Victoire and Sophie learned that their father was attacked by small pox and that the servants trembled at the idea of catching the disease they ran to the sick room they shut themselves in with him in spite of the horrible odour which he emitted even going so far as to sit beneath the canopy of his bed in order to be closer to him and forgot their health and their needs as long as the King's illness lasted. They had but one thought namely to save their father body and soul.

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And yet Madame du Deffand and the Duc de Liancourt chose to see in this conduct something other than disinterested sentiments

At the Carmel of Saint-Denis Sister Thérèse of Saint-Augustine joined her supplications to God to those of her sisters and shared in thought their anxiety. Mesdames did not succeed in snatching their father from death, but Sister Thérèse's great wish was granted. During the night of the 7th-8th of May, Louis demanded his Confessor, the Abbé Maudouse, and became reconciled to God. He died on the 10th at three o'clock in the morning (1774). Fifty persons who had done no more than pass along the corridors at Versailles contracted the same illness as the King, and grave fears were entertained for the lives of his daughters, all three of whom took to their beds.

But, even before she was restored to health, Madame Adélaïde had begun to intrigue and meddle in politics again. It was owing to her influence that at the beginning of his reign Louis XVI's Government had the worst of Ministers, the frivolous, flattering and incompetent Comte de Maurepas. Despite his seventy-three years Madame Adélaïde caused him to be elected in preference to the incorruptible Machault, whom Madame Victoire supported and the diplomat Choiseul, the young Queen's protégé.

For some time Louis XVI continued to consult his Aunt Adélaïde over everything, so great was his confidence in her intelligence. He admitted her to the Council and even allowed her to make appointments to the Treasury and to draw on its funds. But indignant protests against the lady's foolish behaviour

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were raised on all sides. She crowned her dangerous follies by trying to provoke a rupture between the Royal pair. Sister Thérèse of Saint-Augustine the King's brothers the Ducs d'Orléans de Richelieu d'Aiguillon the Duchesse de Noailles and Madame de Marsan supported her in this abominable attempt. The King fortunately at last became aware of Madame Adélaïde's mad acts and criminal injustices and after severe reproaches he ordered her to retire with her sisters to the Château de Bellevue.

But at Bellevue Madame Adélaïde continued to intrigue with her friends against the Queen. Louis XVI intervened a second time but it was not until he had formally forbidden Sister Thérèse of Saint Augustine to meddle in political affairs that relative peace was established. After the birth of a Dauphin (October 1781) Mesdames returned to the Court but ascertaining that henceforward they would never regain the right to meddle in the affairs of the kingdom or those of the Royal pair they decided to concentrate their efforts and their attentions on their estates.

Mesdames were wealthy at that time although Louis XV had not troubled to make provision for them in his will any more than he had bothered to find them husbands. But the four sisters had inherited money from their mother in 1768. In 1775 they bought Bellevue and Brumbaron on the embellishment of which all the artists of the day were employed. It was at Bellevue that Mesdames sumptuously entertained a mixed society of prelates ladies and friends who shared their views. The following menu gives some idea of the dinners at Bellevue.

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MENU OF A GALA DINNER SERVED AT BELLEVUE ¹

FIRST COURSE

Dormant ²
Four Hors-d'œuvre

TWO SOUPS

Thick Soup
Onion Soup

TWO JOINTS.

Sirloin à la broche
Haunch of Mutton

THE REMOVE :

Ducklings de l'Hermitage
Timbales of Game à l'Espagnole.
Pope's Eye of Mutton with
Hariicot Beans.
Fillets of Pullet au Velouté.
Pheasants dressed with Butter
and Truffles
Pigeons à la Gautier and à la
Financière.
Salted Fowl.
Skewered Leverets à la Bretonne.
Quails en Cassolette with Rice.
Ox-Tongue à l'écarlate en
Mironton
Purée of Red-Legged Partridges
à la Portugaise
Quennelles of Pullet en Casse-
role with Rice
Woodcock à la Bourguignote.
Pickled Chicken.
Grilled Mutton Cutlets.
Collops of Filleted Leveret
Fried Chicken à l'Italienne

SECOND COURSE

Hot Brioches.
Gâteau de Savoie.

TWO ENTREMETS

Meringue Tartlets.
Cheese Fondus.

EIGHT ROAST DISHES

Red-Legged Partridges
Chickens
Shoveller Ducks
Chicken de Caux with
Breadcrumbs
Ortolans.
Pigeons aux ailes de
Madame Victoire.
Golden Plovers.
Larks.
Four Salads.

TWELVE ENTREMETS

Fritters
Cardoons à la moelle.
Eggs in Veal Gravy
Mixed Vegetables
Tartlets à l'Anglaise
Stewed Artichokes
Cauliflower.
Coffee Cream
Spinach.
Mironton of Potato
Gâteau Princesse

¹ *Menu D'un Dîner de Gala Servi à Bellevue*

Premier Service

Le Dormant
4 Hors d'œuvre d'office

Deuxième S.

La Brioche
La gâteau da

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To their estates Mesdames Adelaide and Sophie added the magnificent property of Louvois which they bought together Louis XVI gave them the château de Choisy, while they themselves bought the Hermitage.

Such wealth, however, failed to enlarge the Princesses minds Madame Sophie died of dropsy on the 3rd of March 1782 and her three surviving sisters took a pride in remaining unchangeable in their ideas and in their sentiments Louis XVI having by Royal edict in November, 1787 granted civil rights to the Protestants Sister Thérèse of Saint Augustine addressed him a vehement letter of eight pages in which

Deux potages

La garbure
Les oignons d'Espagne
L'aloïsau à la broche.
Le rôti de bœuf de mouton

Rôties

Les caneton de l'Hermitage
Les timbales de gibier à l'espagnole
La noix de mouton aux Haricots blancs
Les filets de poulard au velouté
Les foieandecus au beurre et aux truffes
Les pigeons à la Gautier et à la financière
La poule de Caen au gros sel
Les lapereaux en hachis à la bretonne
Les cailles en cassolette au riz
Les langues de bœuf à l'écarlate en mironton.
Les perdreaux rouges en purée à la portugaise
Les kenelles de poule au casserole au riz
Les bécasses à la bourguignote
Les poulets gras en marinade
Les côtelettes de mouton grillées
Les filets de lotteau en escaloppe
Les poulets gras frits à l'Italienne

Deux Moulins

Les tartelettes meringuées
Les fondus

8 Plats de Rôties

Les perdreaux rouges.
Les poulets gras
Les rôties de rizière
La poule de Caen peinte
Les ortolans
Les pigeons aux ailes de Madame Victoire
Les poulets dorés
Les morceilles
4 salades

12 entremets

Les petits beignets
Les cardes à la moelle
Les coquilles en jus de veau *La mactdoine*
Les tartelettes à l'anglaise
Les artichauts à l'entonnoir
Les choux fleurs
La crème au caillé
Les épinards
Le mironton de pomme
Le gâteau princesse

* Decorative objects made of sugar etc. which remained on the table to the end of the meal. Similar to the "subtleties" of the middle ages. (Translator's note)

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she alternately made violent attacks on the Protestants and bitterly reproached the King. This was her last notorious exploit, for she died on the 23rd of the following December (1787).

Madame Adélaïde and Madame Victoire, although the latter possessed more sense than her elder sister, manifested every day a livelier horror of the philosophers, the encyclopædists and the economists. They were blind to the intellectual movement and to the discontent of the nation. Thus, when the States-General met at Versailles, on the 5th of May, 1789, Madame Adélaïde saw nothing in this event but an opportunity for a fine official display in which she would shine, as befitted her rank. She was much more taken up with her spite against Marie-Antoinette than she was with politics. For example, when the Queen spoke to her of the shocking (*indignes*) French people, Madame Adélaïde maliciously replied: "I think you mean shocked" (*indignés*), insinuating thereby that Marie-Antoinette's behaviour was bound to shock (*indigner*) the good French folk.

But the development of revolutionary events succeeded in rousing the two sisters from their tranquillity. In 1791 we find them seized with fear, imploring their nephew to procure them the necessary papers to enable them to repair to Italy, whither the days of the 5th and 6th of October had filled them with the desire to flee, while the civil constitution of the Clergy had transformed this desire into a formal and immediate request. Louis XVI had much trouble in obtaining these papers. Even so, he could not procure them completely in order, but Mes-
in such a state of agitation that they were

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any longer. They fled from Bellevue in the night of the 19th of February 1791, taking with them none of the millions as the populace sang the day after their departure but scarcely the barest necessities.

Then began a painful and difficult odyssey across Europe. Stopped on their arrival in the villages or towns where the Jacobin spirit prevailed at Moret first, and then at Arnay le-Duc, they were subjected to the most vexatious measures and anticipated with dismay the moment when their escape from France might be prohibited. They were lampooned and ridiculed. Their flight had provoked intense feeling in Paris and they became the butt of the newspapers which spared them neither sarcastic jibes nor insults. The problem of their journey to Italy and the long and lively discussion to which the requested permission to leave France gave rise in the Assembly was re-echoed in the papers. *La Chronique de Paris* (the organ of the constitutional party) announced: Two princesses sedentary by reason of their rank and age as well as from choice suddenly find themselves seized with a mania to travel and gad about the world. *It is odd, but quite possible.* They are going so they say to kiss the Pope's toe. *it is funny but edifying.* Mesdames and Madame Adelaïde especially want to enjoy the rights of man. *that is natural.*

These fair travellers are dragging eighty persons about with them in their suite *very nice indeed* but they are taking twelve millions away with them *that is exceedingly wrong*

Mesdames maintain that they are at liberty to go where they think proper *quite so*

On his side Gontaut the journalist, solemnly warns

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Mesdames in the *Courier des quatre-vingts-trois Départements* that all that they possess " belongs to the nation, to us, Mesdames, absolutely everything, even, if I dare so express it, your chemises ".

So, when Mesdames were stopped at Arnay-le-Duc and their papers and luggage examined, with lightning rapidity the incident was seized on and lampooned. In fierce tones the terrible inquisitors of the Jacobin village ordered Mesdames, who were all of a tremble to :

" Give us Gorsas' chemises ,
Give us the chemises ! "

Madame Adelaïde, the first to be apostrophized, had not got Gorsas' chemises. Then it was Madame Victoire's turn to reply to the demand .

" Give us Gorsas' chemises ,
Give us the chemises "

Now, Madame Victoire had a slight lisp well-known to the Parisians and on the other hand Gorsas was not famed for the cleanliness of his underlinen. Thus the lampoonist makes Madame Victoire reply to her fierce gaoler

" Had Gorzaz any zemizes ?
Had he any zemizes ? "

However, the difficulties were overcome and the Assembly ordered the fierce parish of Arnay-le-Duc to let Mesdames continue their journey. They reached Savoy without further unpleasant interference, then Italy. On the bridge of the Franco-Savoy frontier they had the curious experience of hearing people " O, what ugly old women ! " on the French side, bridge, and of being acclaimed on

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At Rome their old friend Bernis who had come as far as Terni to meet them and the Pope received them as real Princesses amid the ringing of bells and the cheers of the populace. It was almost royal hospitality that Bernis offered in his palace to Madame Adelaide and Madame Victoire.

But Rome was only a halt on the fugitives journey. From there they sought refuge at Caserta on the property of King Ferdinand of the two Sicilies their nephew through the marriage of their sister the Infanta. But he was not able to shelter them for long. From Caserta they repaired to Brindisi and embarked on a Russian frigate which conveyed them to Corfu, then to Trieste which being invalids they chose on account of its salubrious climate. But on the voyage Madame Victoire suffered the most frightful pains. She was a prey to the same malady which had carried off Madame Sophie and every jolt was torture. She suffered so much that she succumbed eighteen days after their arrival at Trieste at the age of sixty-six (June the 8th 1799).

Madame Adelaide was now alone. Exile had made her shy and misfortunes seemed to have turned her into something of a fatalist. The last to survive of Louis XV's and Marie Leczinska's numerous children she had the air of awaiting death with some impatience. It was on the 18th of February 1800 eight months after Madame Victoire's death that the longed for visitant came for her at the age of sixty-eight.

Thus all Louis XV's daughters with the exception of one died without having founded a family. The six daughters who passed through history without playing any definite part in it did not behave as one

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could have wished, because their nebulous position prevented them from perceiving what was their duty. Neglected in their education, with no one to give them advice or counsel at an age when both were indispensable, they were clumsy and often wanting in tact and discernment. But all had genuine qualities which, properly directed and cultivated, would have made them better women than they were. Their real misfortune and the gravest injury which they suffered was in having Louis XV for a father.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF MARIE-ANTOINETTE, DAUPHINE AND QUEEN OF FRANCE

MARIE-ANTOINETTE was little more than fourteen and a half years old when in 1770 she went to France to marry the future Louis XVI. She was a very wide-awake little Princess but very ignorant. Her mother the Empress Maria Theresa had had no time to attend either to her education or to that of her sisters and the little girls entrusted to the care of more or less conscientious governesses learnt only what they wanted to learn. The Empress however, made a point of examining the work of the Archduchesses once a month. On one of these occasions she was agreeably surprised at the graceful legible handwriting of the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette and delightedly congratulated the young Princess. But Marie Antoinette hanging her head in shame confessed in a low voice that the beautifully written page for which she had just been praised was not her work. All she had done was to go lightly over the letters written by her governess. The beautiful open letters the graceful capitals, the artistic fine strokes owed nothing to the hand of the Archduchess.

So when Marie-Antoinette became Dauphine she hardly knew how to write. Glück had been her music master but she had profited very little by his lessons.



MARIE ANTOINETTE

2nd November 1755 16th October 1793 Dauphine 10th May 1770 16th May 1774
Queen of France 16th May 1774 19th August 1790

Print by Curtis

MARIE ANTOINETTE

would seem to have justified the nicknames of *Grill* and *Logue* (*Scrap Rag* and *Dad*) with which they were tormented by their father. The Dauphin who was as dull in mind as he was heavy in body thought of nothing beyond eating, shooting and building, until he devoted himself to the art of lock making. Despite all her blandishments it took Marie Antoinette a year to excite him to the point of kissing her. Seven years were to pass before he exercised his marital rights. The brothers of the Dauphin were the pedantic and false Comte de Provence and Comte d'Artois, who was pleasure mad, irresponsible and indiscreet to the point of openly setting aside everything respected and loved by the people. Everyone at this pitiable Court was absorbed in intrigue and personal rivalries. Not one amongst them troubled himself over the sufferings of the country and when the people thought of the Court at all it was to curse it. Pache has said "At Versailles the Court yawns as it devours without the least pleasure or enjoyment, twenty-five million men."

So the young Dauphine came to a Court which was sunk in vice, where there was none to guide her judiciously, to offer her a bracing and intelligent friendship, or to give her a true idea of her duties. She had no-one to advise her but her mother's Ambassador Mercy d'Argenteau and the Abbé Vermond, who was entirely devoted to the Austrian Ambassador. But Mercy d'Argenteau was first and foremost an Austrian. He, like Maria Theresa, realized that the presence of the Archduchess at Versailles helped the Austrian cause in Europe. The Court of Vienna had married Marie Antoinette in France so that she might serve Austria in

As soon as the French Minister, Choiseul, the personal friend of the Empress Maria Theresa, had arranged for the marriage between the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette and the heir presumptive to the French throne, Maria Theresa endeavoured to remedy the faults in her daughter's education. She summoned the actors Sainville and Dufresne to France to give her elocution lessons and the Abbé Vermond was despatched from Versailles to Vienna to introduce the young Archduchess to French literature. But Marie-Antoinette concentrated on nothing which she did not like. She was disheartened by the least mental strain, novels, and the lightest for choice, were the only books in which she was at all interested. When she repaired to Versailles the students of the college of Soissons made her a speech in Latin; the future Dauphine responded in the same language, but the reply had been drawn up by the Abbé Vermond and the Princess did not understand one single word that she uttered. She would not take the trouble to listen to the translation and had been content to learn the sounds by heart. So Marie-Antoinette came to Versailles without that intellectual culture which would have helped her to react against the frivolity of the Court of Louis XV and Madame Dubarry.

The Court of Versailles was at this period the most vicious and the most childish in Europe. A woman from the low ranks of society, with no morality and no ideals, dominated the mind of the old king and gave its tone to the Court. The daughters of Louis XV, stingy and jealous old maids,¹ whose narrow religion withered the heart instead of widening its sympathies,

¹ See chapter on *The Daughters of Louis XV*

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

would seem to have justified the nicknames of *Graille Chiffe* and *Loque* (Scrap, Rag and Dud) with which they were tormented by their father. The Dauphin who was as dull in mind as he was heavy in body thought of nothing beyond eating, shooting and building, until he devoted himself to the art of lock making. Despite all her blandishments it took Marie-Antoinette a year to excite him to the point of kissing her. *Seven years* were to pass before he exercised his marital rights. The brothers of the Dauphin were the pedantic and false Comte de Provence and Comte d'Artois who was pleasure-mad, irresponsible and indiscreet to the point of openly setting at defiance everything respected and loved by the people. Everyone at this pitiable Court was absorbed in intrigue and personal rivalries. Not one amongst them troubled himself over the sufferings of the country and when the people thought of the Court at all it was to curse it. Pache has said 'At Versailles the Court yawns as it devours, without the least pleasure or enjoyment twenty-five million men.'

So the young Dauphine came to a Court which was sunk in vice where there was none to guide her judiciously to offer her a bracing and intelligent friendship or to give her a true idea of her duties. She had no-one to advise her but her mother's Ambassador, Mercy d'Argenteau and the Abbé Vermond who was entirely devoted to the Austrian Ambassador. But Mercy d'Argenteau was first and foremost an Austrian. He like Maria Theresa, realized that the presence of the Archduchess at Versailles helped the Austrian cause in Europe. The Court of Vienna had married Marie Antoinette in France so that she might serve Austria in

that country. The young Dauphine was to remain an Austrian. Mercy d'Argenteau guided her with a devotion, a scrupulosity and a discretion, of which, perhaps, there is no other example in the history of diplomacy. And as Marie-Antoinette seemed to be amenable, as she gained an ascendancy over Louis XV, who called her "a charming little creature, full of life", as she compelled the Dauphin to become interested in her, Mercy d'Argenteau, who already saw Austria ruling France through the medium of Marie-Antoinette, wrote on April 20th, 1773, in a glow of triumph, "It is certain that one day Madame the Archduchess will govern this kingdom". And he thought: "Austria will govern it through her." After this, is Marie-Antoinette to be held really responsible for having to some extent deserved the name of "the Austrian", with which she was taunted by the French people on the eve of the Revolution? She had followed all too faithfully, without perceiving their danger, the counsels of the one honest man who had sought to guide her. But before they became political, Marie-Antoinette's faults showed themselves in her private conduct. When this child, with no one to advise her, came to Versailles, she started by making fun of everybody; first of all, of Madame de Noailles, who had been appointed Mistress of her Household. She nicknamed her "Madame Etiquette" and burst out laughing in her face when Madame de Noailles, with her old-fashioned gestures and manners, remonstrated with her. She laughed, too, at all the court personages who lent themselves to mimic, especially if they were old, for she would forgive anything but old age. It was this reflecting on this ~~coquetterie~~ ¹⁵

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that Napoleon petulantly remarked 'No man of sense, or of consequence could escape the banter of the young courtiers whose natural propensity to ridicule was stimulated by the applause of a young and beautiful sovereign'

She made fun also of the favourite Madame Dubarry whom she detested and justly so but whom the Empress Maria Theresa, experienced in politics forbade her to judge "You are not to know what Dubarry is to the King" But Marie Antoinette was not satisfied with laughing at Dubarry, she not only slandered her herself but set other tongues wagging too She loved listening to the Court gossip and several ladies were in her good graces because they had more slanderous tongues than the others

The young Princess, greedy for pleasure sought amusement and distraction on every occasion in the beginning she surrounded herself with a crowd of little dogs, teaching them to bark when people said things which she did not like. She indulged in horse-riding to excess in spite of the remonstrances of Maria Theresa who feared her prospects of maternity might suffer by it She was extremely fond of donkey races These races made Paris talk because the Dauphine who had now grown tall failed to display that propriety which one could have wished She loved tumbling off her donkey and seeing the ladies-in-waiting tumble off too Take care she said to a lady who asked if she might join in the races 'if you want to be one of us you must be in a proper condition to tumble' These tumbles as one can well imagine were very often accompanied by grotesque incidents The organizer of these daring sports was Marie-Antoinette's own

brother-in-law, the young Comte d'Artois, aged nineteen. His bad reputation alone made him a congenial companion to the Dauphine, who was accustomed to like in people only what amused her.

The faithful Mercy d'Argenteau, who observed with deep sorrow Marie-Antoinette's childish levity, her irresponsibility, her frivolity, her love of pleasure, of change and racket, her inability to concentrate her mind on any serious subject, or to do any useful work, resolved to take a big step to make her popular and to turn the current of her thoughts. Marie-Antoinette had now been married more than three years and she had not yet made her state entry into the capital. The people were growing more and more dissatisfied with the estrangement between Paris and the Court, which one might have supposed to be at the antipodes to each other. The Austrian Ambassador rightly thought that if Marie-Antoinette could bring the Court and the capital together the people would be infinitely grateful to her. That is why he persuaded the Dauphine to obtain the permission of Louis XV to make her state entry into Paris at the side of her husband. Louis XV, delighted to please his charming daughter-in-law, readily gave his consent, and on June 8th, 1773, the Dauphin and his wife entered their capital in state. They were welcomed by the populace with wild enthusiasm. The young Princess was infinitely gracious, beaming with smiles, and full of life, and the people fell madly in love with her.

Marie-Antoinette was at that time in such favour that it needed the accumulation of many faults to rob her of her popularity. She was ~~even~~ ^{soon} for receiving no-one but the Austrian Ambassador

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days of the King's illness and after his death which supervened in May 1774 for having paid heed to all the instructions which came from Vienna These instructions even arranged for the Royal Family's style of living The hunting-suppers which until then had been for men only were henceforth to include ladies Henceforth also the King and Queen were to occupy the same room

But the Court was hardly out of mourning when Marie-Antoinette once more became intoxicated with pleasure.

Marie-Antoinette was twenty when she became Queen and she was more than beautiful she was alluring Madame Vigée le Brun who painted her portrait in 1779 said that she carried herself better than any woman in France and this at a period when every *grande dame* carried herself splendidly So great was the charm of her expression and smile that one did not notice that her features were not very regular, that her forehead was too high and her underlip too thick, making the mouth unpleasing although it was small The oval of her face was too elongated but her beautiful blue eyes were bright and full of intelligence, her aquiline nose was too sharp, but the whiteness and beauty of her complexion were unrivalled

The fact of being Queen meant nothing more to Marie-Antoinette than greater liberty to gratify her whims and caprices and further amusements She changed the official manners of the Court For the strict etiquette of Louis XIV maintained by Louis XV, she substituted ease freedom of speech and manners and gay unconventional parties where almost everything was tolerated excepting boredom Marie-Antoinette

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regarded those hours as lost which were empty of amusement. But perhaps what she enjoyed most was to be admired and to receive compliments. Her great passion was to please. She sought and relished the slightest praise, and by flattery she could be led like a child. It gave her infinite pleasure also to feel that men were moved as she passed and she often bestowed on them looks which were rather more feminine than regal, for the sole pleasure of feeling that she stirred their emotions.

The longed-for birth of three children, the first of whom was born in 1778, made no difference at all to the Queen's mode of life. On the contrary, she added fresh pleasures to those which had at first amused her. She began to act with her brother-in-law and the young noblemen at Court. The first series of performances was from August 1st to September 27th, 1780. On October 29th, 1781, she was destined to give birth to a first Dauphin, whose death at an early age was a great grief to her, and on March 27th, 1785, was born the child who was to be called Louis XVII.

Marie-Antoinette also indulged in wild sleigh-rides across Paris; she rushed about "en diable"¹ with the Comte d'Artois, was present at all the races where he had entered a horse, and took immense pleasure in congratulating the winning jockeys, in junketing with the noblemen on the racecourse, and in laying high stakes.

She even went to the masked balls at the Opera House. She had been taken there once by her husband during the carnival of 1773, when she was still only Dauphine, and she took a fancy to this very *risqué* amusement, which abounded in compromising

¹ "Le diable" was the name given to a dangerous two-wheeled vehicle in which the occupant had to stand. It was much patronised by the Comte d'Artois.

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promiscuities and where under cover of the mask there was no limit to what might be said. In order to get there Marie-Antoinette would steal away from Versailles with one of her maids-of-honour dress in Paris at the house of a young nobleman of her acquaintance and often did not leave the ball until six o'clock in the morning.

So it was that during the carnival of 1779 a month after the birth of her daughter she left Versailles one evening with the Princesse d'Hénin the most questionable of all her maids-of-honour to repair to one of the masked balls at the Opera. When they reached Paris the Queen and her companion donned their disguise at the house of the Duc de Coigny, celebrated as much for his extravagance as for the ridiculous tightness of his trousers. When they were dressed the Queen and her maid-of-honour accepted one of the Duke's carriages to convey them to the Opera House but they had only gone a very short distance when the main spring of the carriage broke. What was to be done? It was one o'clock in the morning and the Queen of France with no other escort than a woman of questionable character was obliged to leave her coach and to face in a lonely street the risks incident to carnival night. In order to lessen the dangers of the situation the Princesse d'Hénin judged it best to seek shelter in a neighbouring house. Here then we see the Queen's maid-of-honour knocking loudly and repeatedly on the nearest door. The house was occupied by a peaceable silk merchant. Startled and shocked by such a noise at his door at so late an hour, the good man grumbling and suspicious cautiously opened a window on the first floor. 'Open the door as quickly as possible' cried the Princesse d'Hénin.

"the safety of two noblewomen is at stake" But the tradesman considered that noblewomen would not be running about the streets on a carnival night and regarded those who were knocking on his door as no better than adventuresses So he closed the window again and decided to return to bed.

His refusal increased the fears of the Queen and her lady-in-waiting, and, exasperated by the difficulties of the situation, they redoubled their efforts to force the tradesman's hospitality The knocker was wielded ceaselessly, appeals reiterated, nothing was neglected to induce him to surrender He returned at last to the window still wearing his nightcap, emblem of the peace he desired to preserve Conversation was resumed between the street and the first floor. But the shopkeeper remained obdurate until the Princesse d'Hénin, who had come to an end of her arguments, finally disclosed the identity of his visitors At this revelation the tradesman rushed towards the door, which he threw wide open to admit his sovereign But a host of neighbouring windows were already filled with busybodies and gossips who on the morrow would be asking if it were indeed fitting that the Queen of France should be gadding about the streets of Paris at night in a mask When the ladies had gained admittance to the silk-merchant's house his whole family were assiduous in their attentions, and an hour later, Marie-Antoinette, with her maid-of-honour, set out once more on the road to the Opera House in a hired cab, which the tradesman's zeal had procured for her The story of her adventure had probably preceded her to the ball, for when she arrived she could see that in spite of her mask her entry attracted a great deal of

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attention. A man disguised as a fishwoman even went so far as to cross-examine her in the coarsest possible way

Next day the simple minded Louis XVI roared with laughter when he heard of the escapade

A little later in the same year Marie-Antoinette had an attack of measles and for the sake of precaution the King was removed from her chamber but the Queen's sick nurses were Besenval who had made love to her Coigny Guines notorious for the scandals of his private life when Ambassador in London scandals which led to his recall and by way of compensation procured for him the title of Duke and Esterhazy Mercy d'Argenteau interfered and insisted that these gentlemen should leave the Queen's room at 11 o'clock at night until 6 o'clock in the morning Marie-Antoinette submitted very unwillingly to this arrangement These agreeable companions made her forget her illness with their amusing but very broad talk. She gave them considerable licence even permitting them to hazard jokes in the worst possible taste at the King's expense She herself in 1775 writing to a young Viennese nobleman did not hesitate to allude to her husband as poor man! Poor man! she put poor man when writing of her husband to one of my subjects exclaimed Maria Theresa in amazement in a letter to Mercy d'Argenteau, after having read her daughter's note to the Viennese nobleman

Nevertheless it would be entirely wrong to suspect Marie-Antoinette of conjugal unfaithfulness In thousands of brochures it has been stated that she deceived Louis XVI At the beginning of her reign a scurrilous lampoon in verse entitled 'Les Amours

de Charlot et Toinette" named the Comte d'Artois as the Queen's lover. They were never anything more than play-fellows, indulging in frank speech, which the libertine d'Artois loved to enliven with the recital of his licentious exploits. Besenval, Guines, Coigny, Esterhazy, the Duc de Nemours and several others, whose names scandal has brought forward, have not the right to boast even of as much intimacy as this. Marie-Antoinette may have had a rather more lively affection for that amiable roué, the Duc de Lauzun, who, brought up in the boudoir of Madame de Pompadour, united great charm with a total lack of morals. But whatever de Lauzun's gascon boastfulness prompted him to write, he had no more justification than the others for vaunting a conquest which he never made.

Only one among the young men who visited the Court of Versailles made the Queen's heart beat. He was the Comte de Fersen, a tall and handsome youth, well-made, with an aristocratic face, a reserved manner and grave demeanour. He was the son of a Swedish statesman. At twenty-four years of age he had been strongly recommended to the French Court by his sovereign, Gustavus III. Marie-Antoinette had met him on several occasions at the masked balls at the Opera House, where they conversed together for a long time, then Marie-Antoinette showed him special marks of favour. The jealous talked, so the Comte de Fersen, in order not to compromise the Queen, determined to leave Versailles and France and to go to America to fight in the cause of American independence. It was in vain that Marie-Antoinette implored him not to leave her. She was ready to make many

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sacrifices to keep him by her side. But Fersen's respect equalled his love and after a week spent almost entirely at the Court of Versailles, during which the Queen could never look at him without her eyes filling with tears Fersen embarked for America whence he was not to return until June, 1783. When Madame de Fitz-James said to him on the eve of his departure

You are going away after having made a conquest, Fersen sadly and chivalrously replied 'Madame I have made no conquest or I should not be going away'

When de Fersen returned and the Queen saw him again her feelings towards him were unchanged. He too was the same romantic lover and knight, ready to sacrifice all for her whom he loved. Thus when compelled to leave France in 1788 to fight in Finland he hurried back to Versailles at the first rumours of trouble in 1789 to watch over the object of his affections during the storm. He it was who arranged for the flight of the Royal pair paid for the coach which he had had built for the journey obtained the necessary money for the fugitives and disguised as a coachman drove the carriage which he hoped would bear them to safety. The attempt failed by reason of the indiscretions of the King and his family but Fersen blamed himself alone he was tortured by the thought of the sufferings to which his loved one would be exposed and from this moment his whole life was dedicated either to the rescue of Marie Antoinette or to the defence of her memory.¹

¹ Even to-day many persist in seeing more than a romantic and chivalrous friendship in the ties which united Marie-Antoinette and Comte Axel de Fersen. Among other things they support their view on an occurrence which preceded the publication of the fine and most interesting work published in 1878 by the great nephew of Comte Axel de Fersen Baron R. M. de Klinkowström

The Comte de Fersen was not the only one who found the way to Marie-Antoinette's heart. Many female favourites also occupied a very large place in her affections. It has even been said that it was for these favourites that her most ardent passion was reserved. They were very numerous, but those who attained the highest place in the Queen's good graces were the fair and ethereal Madame de Lamballe, who fainted away at the mere scent of a bunch of violets ; beautiful, dark Madame Jules de Polignac, who was pleasantly frivolous and outwardly without any pretensions, but whose harmless exterior concealed an insatiable greed on behalf of herself and her relations ; the captivating Madame de Guéménée, who, separated from her husband, lived openly with the Duc de Coigny, the King's equerry, and lent her apartments for those endless faro parties, at which Marie-Antoinette lost enormous sums of money ; Mesdames de Chimay, de Dillon, d'Hénin and many others besides. Marie-Antoinette showered money on her ladies. For Madame de Lamballe she revived the position of Mistress of the Queen's Household with a salary of one hundred and fifty thousand *livres* ; in order that

(Le Comte de Fersen et la Cour de France, Firmin-Didot, éditeur)
Instead of publishing in this work all the papers of Comte Axel de Fersen which were in his possession, Baron de Klinkowstrom, burnt some of them and over others spilled drops of ink which rendered the papers illegible in places.

This is a true fact, which, through the medium of a devoted friend, Mademoiselle Griboval, has been vouched for to the author by a member of the Fersen family.

But it proves nothing either against the Queen or against Fersen. Some of Marie-Antoinette's letters would no doubt be blotted from motives of political discretion in order not to compromise names which had not previously been thrown in the *mélée*, or from a sense of delicacy (the expression of certain feelings, even the purest, can ill stand the strong light of publicity) or by reason of family susceptibilities (a revered Queen would know what it was desirable to keep back from the public) or for a thousand analogous reasons.

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the father of another favourite should be made a marshal she had seven new Marshals of France created simultaneously Madame de Polignac had only to express a wish to have it immediately granted The sums of money which the Polignac family cost France at that time are inconceivable and thus when Paris was without bread !

The reign of Marie-Antoinette may also be described as the golden age of hairdressers dressmakers and tailors She favoured the most extravagant style of hair-dressing the *Belle Poule* the *Puff* , the

Qésaco with its three bunches of feathers at the back and its bunch of ribbons composed of eight bows in front for she hoped to make herself look taller by adorning her head with plumes Léonard the hairdresser was almost as important as a statesman in her eyes On March 5th 1779 an undesired incident occurred which in some degree symbolized and stressed the importance which the dressmakers and trinket sellers had assumed The King and Queen had driven in state to Paris Notwithstanding his people's cheers Louis XVI who was always rather dull and sleepy after food dozed by the side of his radiant Queen who alert and smiling acknowledged the sympathetic welcome given to the Sovereigns While the King was still drowsing the Royal procession approached the balcony of Mademoiselle Bertin chief dressmaker to the Queen and highly esteemed by her In order to show her affection for the King and Queen Mademoiselle Bertin had grouped all her employees on her balcony so that they might cheer their Majesties as they passed Touched by this attention on the part of Mademoiselle Bertin Marie Antoinette wished to acknowledge it by

a special bow. But in order to do this she turned somewhat sharply in her seat and the jolt awakened Louis. On opening his eyes, the King observed the Queen smiling at a particular spot, so, still only half awake, the Monarch who thought he had been wanting in courtesy by not bowing to the individual at whom the Queen continued to look, could think of no other means to make good his fault than to stand up at once in the carriage and make a low obeisance in the direction in which the Queen was gazing. Thus did the King of France, all unwittingly, honour with a low and special bow the Queen's chief dressmaker. The noblemen could do no less than the King. And so it came about that all the carriages in the Royal procession stopped one after the other beneath Mademoiselle Bertin's balcony, while their occupants rose and bowed low to the Queen's dressmaker.

Of all her jewels, Marie-Antoinette preferred her diamonds. In the first year of his reign Louis XVI had bought diamonds for her to the value of three-hundred thousand *francs*, and she had bought, privately, a pair of diamond ear-rings at a cost of four hundred and sixty thousand *francs*, which it took her four years to pay. Some time later she bought diamond bracelets which cost her one hundred thousand crowns. After this is it surprising that a schemer like Madame Lamotte, who was as daring as she was intelligent, should succeed in heaping up riches and in compromising the young Sovereign by the story which she was able to weave round the Queen's passion for diamonds? Scarcely anyone doubted the Queen's guilt when, in August, 1785, the famous lawsuit, called the "diamond necklace case" was tried. The Cardinal de Rohan,

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the young dressmaker who had personated the Queen and even Cagliostro were commiserated but Marie Antoinette received hardly any sympathy in this dramatic and slanderous case, which damaged her reputation down to the day of her death

The number of Marie-Antoinette's enemies was also increased by her thoughtlessness. It is said that the day after the first performance of *Zémire et Azor* Marmontel and Grétry were presented to her in the gallery at Fontainebleau through which she was passing on her way to mass. The Queen paid all her compliments on the success of the new opera to Grétry, telling him that during the night she had thought of the enchanting effect of the trio behind the magic mirror then she pursued her way without having addressed a single word to Marmontel, the author of the libretto. Grétry, delighted did not notice the omission and taking Marmontel to his arms exclaimed 'Ah my friend ! that comes of writing good music !

' and poor words ! ' was the icy rejoinder

On another occasion Marie-Antoinette received Piccini and wishing to pay him the honour of singing to him, asked the great artist to accompany her on the harpsichord. Thoughtlessly she chose an air from *Alceste* by Glück, Piccini's rival in music.¹

Marie-Antoinette did not exert a good personal influence over the Government of Louis XVI. She misunderstood Turgot and apart from the Austrian orientation which she tried to give to French politics her influence in the choice of ministers was most unfortunate. As Lamartine says in his *Histoire des Girondins*

¹ Anecdotes related by the Prince de Ligne in *La Ville et la Cour au XVIII^e siècle par Adolphe Julian*

"she could neither foresee, nor understand, nor accept the Revolution , she merely provoked and feared it. The charming favourite of an ageing monarch, she could only enchant, mislead, and die. She enveloped her husband in her own unpopularity and dragged him to his doom "

But this is going outside the private life of Marie-Antoinette Her meddling in politics belongs to history. Let us leave this Queen, so charming and yet so ill-fitted to reign in France, regretting that it should have needed so long a chain of woes, and so bitter a persecution by fate to change her from an *enfant terrible* into a heroine. Let us also note that though hit by misfortune Marie-Antoinette rose to meet it From the day when, in the coach which brought her back from Varennes to Paris, her tears won Barnave over to her cause, to that other day when she appeared before those who had the audacity to pass sentence on her, Marie-Antoinette passed with ever greater dignity and nobility from virtue to virtue, from sacrifice to sacrifice, until the sublime moment when she attained a martyr's crown

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